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# Selections

From the Works of

Bishop Thorold







James A. Winton

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# Selections

From the Works of

## Bishop Thorold

With Preface by the

Lord Bishop of Winchester

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## PREFACE

*THE Editor of this book has asked me to write a few words by way of preface. I am glad to do so, not because I think any preface necessary, but because it gives me fresh opportunity of expressing my own indebtedness to the Bishop whom it has twice been my anxious privilege to succeed. So succeeding him, I have learned to know as few others can the enduring power of the things he used to say.*

*Not every writer, even of the foremost sort, lends himself readily to the compiler of "selections." Some little volumes of this sort do real injustice, it seems to me, to the author from whose pages of sustained narrative or argument — historical, theological, metaphysical, or hortatory — the "selections" come. To understand the quoted words we need their context, and it is not there.*

*But in Bishop Thorold's books there is little attempt at sustained argument. What he did pre-eminently well was to express simple thoughts on sacred things in pithy, telling words. To*

*quote his own phrase, "a man's style is himself," and the strength of his remarkable personality lay, I think, in his power, whether in conversation, in the pulpit, or with his pen, of giving forth from the deep storehouse of his spiritual thought and experience "things new and old" in words which, as Luther said of St. Paul's, "have hands and feet." They cling and stay. They have already helped thousands whom he never saw. Reproduced as this book reproduces them, they will help many more. God grant it.*

RANDALL WINTON.

FARNHAM, Nov. 7, 1897.



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHRIST THE LORD OVER ALL	
THE WORLD AND CHRIST . . . . .	17
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
CHRIST PRE-EMINENT . . . . .	18
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
THE CLAIM OF CHRIST . . . . .	19
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
CHRIST HIS OWN RELIGION . . . . .	20
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
THE ASSENT OF THE WILL . . . . .	20
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE REASON BAFFLED . . . . .	21
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
THE NECESSITY OF FAITH . . . . .	21
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
THE DISASTER OF LOST FAITH . . . . .	22
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
CHRIST IN HIS HUMANITY . . . . .	25
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
"TEMPTED LIKE AS WE ARE" . . . . .	27
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
MAN'S INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM . . . . .	27
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST	
THE LAW OF SELF-SURRENDER . . . . .	28
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	

	PAGE
HUMANITY ON THE CROSS . . . . .	30
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
THE HABIT OF SACRIFICE . . . . .	32
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
THE SENSE OF SIN . . . . .	34
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE VITALITY OF SIN . . . . .	35
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE PENALTY OF SIN . . . . .	36
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
REPENTANCE AND PENITENCE . . . . .	37
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
GILGAL, BETHEL, AND JORDAN . . . . .	38
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
 THE INNER LIFE	
GOD'S FATHERHOOD . . . . .	39
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
TRIALS OF FAITH . . . . .	41
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
WHEN GOD HIDES HIS FACE . . . . .	42
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE SENSE OF POSSESSING GOD . . . . .	46
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
GOD'S ANSWER TO DOUBT . . . . .	47
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
CHRIST'S LOVE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL . . . . .	49
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE SIN OF DISTRUST . . . . .	51
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
DEVOUTNESS . . . . .	51
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
MEDITATION . . . . .	53
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	

# Contents

5

	PAGE
CONTEMPLATION . . . . .	53
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
THE STRIVING FOR HOLINESS . . . . .	55
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
ARE WE IN EARNEST? . . . . .	56
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
HOLY COMMUNION . . . . .	56
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
FREQUENCY OF HOLY COMMUNION . . . . .	58
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
THE PLACE OF ORDINANCES . . . . .	59
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
CHRIST'S INDEPENDENCE OF ORDINANCES . . . . .	59
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
ARIDITY OF SOUL . . . . .	60
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
SPIRITUAL CONSOLATIONS . . . . .	61
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
SPIRITUAL SLOTH . . . . .	62
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
LUKEWARM CHRISTIANS . . . . .	64
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
THE VALUE OF FASTING . . . . .	66
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
JEALOUSY AND REPINING . . . . .	67
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
LITTLENESS OF SOUL . . . . .	68
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE RADIANCE OF HUMBLE SOULS . . . . .	71
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
THE ASSURANCE OF EXPERIENCE . . . . .	71
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	

	PAGE
THE BIBLE	
OUR LORD'S SOLACE AND DELIGHT . . . . .	72
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
THE RANGE OF CHRISTIAN STUDY . . . . .	73
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
INTELLECTUAL TEMPTATIONS . . . . .	74
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
THE DANGERS OF THE AGE . . . . .	75
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
DELUSIVE CONFIDENCE . . . . .	76
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE . . . . .	77
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
RESPECT FOR OTHER CREEDS . . . . .	77
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
BAPTISM . . . . .	78
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
RELIGION IN DAILY LIFE	
SAINTLINESS AND COMMON DUTIES . . . . .	79
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
"HE KNOWETH OUR FRAME" . . . . .	80
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
THE LOVE OF LIFE . . . . .	81
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLDLING . . . . .	83
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
HAPPINESS AND PEACE . . . . .	83
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
DIVINE PROVIDENCE . . . . .	85
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
SPECIAL PROVIDENCE . . . . .	88
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	

# Contents

7

	PAGE
PROVIDENCE AND AFFLICTION . . . . .	90
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
PROVIDENCE AND PRAYER . . . . .	92
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
DOES GOD ANSWER PRAYER? . . . . .	93
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
PRAYER FOR TEMPORAL BLESSINGS . . . . .	95
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
THE POSSIBILITIES OF PRAYER . . . . .	96
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
PRAYER THE MEASURE OF HOLINESS . . . . .	97
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
GOD EVER FAITHFUL . . . . .	98
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
PATIENCE WITH GOD'S DELAY . . . . .	99
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
GOD'S PURPOSE IN US . . . . .	101
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
GOD'S INSTRUMENTS . . . . .	101
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
THE STRUGGLE WITH THE OLD ADAM . . . . .	102
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
SCIENCE, MUSIC, ART . . . . .	104
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	

## GETTING AND SPENDING

MONEY AND ITS TESTS . . . . .	105
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
THE RIGHT AND WRONG OF SPECULATION . . . . .	106
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
WEALTH A STEWARDSHIP . . . . .	107
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
DRESS AND ADORNMENT . . . . .	108
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	

	PAGE
INNOCENT INDULGENCE . . . . .	109
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
EXCESSIVE EXPENDITURE . . . . .	111
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
SORDID CARES . . . . .	111
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
FRUGAL CONTENT . . . . .	113
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE . . . . .	114
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
THE NEMESIS OF SINFUL SUCCESS . . . . .	114
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
LOVE AND MARRIAGE	
EARLY ENGAGEMENTS . . . . .	116
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
LONG ENGAGEMENTS . . . . .	118
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
MISTAKEN ENGAGEMENTS . . . . .	118
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
CONDITIONS OF A HAPPY MARRIAGE . . . . .	119
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
HONEYMOONS . . . . .	120
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
THE FIRST YEAR . . . . .	121
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
THE BEST DOWRY . . . . .	122
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
COURTESY AT HOME . . . . .	124
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
UNWISE DEVOTEDNESS . . . . .	124
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
THE SPIRITUAL IN MARRIAGE . . . . .	125
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	

# Contents

9

IMPROVIDENT MARRIAGES . . . . .	PAGE 127
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
UNHAPPY MARRIAGES . . . . .	128
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
BELoved SPINSTERHOOD . . . . .	130
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
AS THE YEARS GO BY . . . . .	131
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	

## CHILDREN

THE FLOWER OF THE WORLD . . . . .	132
<i>On Children</i>	
THEIR NEED OF SYMPATHY . . . . .	133
<i>On Children</i>	
THEIR SPIRITUAL TROUBLES . . . . .	134
<i>On Children</i>	
HINTS ON TRAINING . . . . .	136
<i>On Children</i>	
THE JOY OF CHILDHOOD . . . . .	138
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
THE SUFFERING OF CHILDREN . . . . .	139
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
THE DEATH OF CHILDREN . . . . .	140
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
BOYS AND GIRLS . . . . .	141
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
OUR CHILDREN ARE GOD'S . . . . .	143
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
GROWN UP . . . . .	144
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
FATHER AND CHILD . . . . .	147
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW . . . . .	149
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	

	PAGE
THE MYSTERY OF PAIN . . . . .	151
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE ENIGMA OF EVIL . . . . .	152
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE DISCIPLINE OF SUFFERING	
THE MEANING OF CHASTISEMENT . . . . .	153
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
AN EDUCATION AND PREPARATION . . . . .	154
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
THE AFFLICTION OF THE GOOD . . . . .	155
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLE . . . . .	156
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
THE BLESSINGS OF SICKNESS . . . . .	158
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
THE CROSS IN THE SICK-ROOM . . . . .	160
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
PATIENCE IN WEAKNESS . . . . .	160
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
RESIGNATION OF SPIRIT . . . . .	162
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
THE TEMPTATIONS OF SICKNESS . . . . .	164
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
COMPENSATIONS OF ILLNESS . . . . .	165
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
THE SERVICE OF ILL HEALTH . . . . .	168
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
THE ILLUMINATION OF SORROW . . . . .	168
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE WEANING OF SORROW . . . . .	169
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE SORROWS OF THE JUST . . . . .	170
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	



# Contents

I I

THE EVIDENCE OF GOD IN SORROW . . . .	PAGE 171
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	

## BEREAVEMENT

THE SOLACE OF THE RESURRECTION . . . .	173
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
THE VISION OF FAITH . . . . .	173
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
THE LOVE OF THE DEPARTED . . . . .	174
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE CHIEF REGRET . . . . .	175
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
REASONABLENESS IN SORROW . . . . .	175
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
THE NEED OF COMPANIONSHIP . . . . .	177
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
IF WE COULD HAVE FORESEEN . . . . .	178
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
WOULD WE BRING THEM BACK? . . . . .	179
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	

DISAPPOINTMENTS . . . . .	181
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	

## FRIENDSHIP

THE VALUE OF ADVICE . . . . .	185
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE SPIRITUAL HELP OF FRIENDSHIP . . . .	186
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
A FRIEND'S BEST SERVICE . . . . .	187
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
THE SWEET REASONABLENESS OF FRIENDSHIP .	188
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
THE DREAD OF OBLIGATION . . . . .	190
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	

	PAGE
SYMPATHY	
THE FRUIT OF SUFFERING . . . . .	192
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
THE GREAT LOSS IN BEREAVEMENT . . . . .	193
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
WHAT SYMPATHY MEANS . . . . .	194
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE NEED OF EXPERIENCE . . . . .	195
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE HELP OF APPRECIATION . . . . .	196
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
THE INFLUENCE OF CHARACTER . . . . .	197
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
CONVERSATION . . . . .	198
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
SITTING IN JUDGMENT . . . . .	200
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
CENSURE AND UNKINDNESS . . . . .	201
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
LETTER-WRITING	
WILLINGNESS TO HELP . . . . .	203
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
CONDOLENCE . . . . .	204
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
LETTERS TO CHILDREN . . . . .	205
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
OLD TIES . . . . .	206
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
NOBLESSE OBLIGE . . . . .	207
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	

# Contents 13

	PAGE
THE DANGER OF JESTING . . . . .	208
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
LETTERS TO BE KEPT . . . . .	208
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
LETTERS TO BE DESTROYED . . . . .	210
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
USEFULNESS . . . . .	211
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
WORK AND SANCTIFICATION . . . . .	212
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
THE SECRET OF WORK . . . . .	213
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
UNWEARIEDNESS IN WELL-DOING . . . . .	215
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
SELF-DENIAL FOR CHRIST'S SAKE	
CHARITY IS BETTER . . . . .	215
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
THE USE OF INTOXICANTS . . . . .	216
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
GOING TO THE THEATRE . . . . .	219
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
SUNDAY OBSERVANCE . . . . .	221
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
TO DO GOOD HOPING FOR NOTHING . . . . .	223
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
OLD AGE	
ITS CONTENTED WORK . . . . .	224
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	

	PAGE
THE BEAUTY OF OLD AGE . . . . .	226
<i>The Claim of Christ on the Young</i>	
GHOSTS OF THE PAST . . . . .	226
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE APPROACH OF DEATH	
OUR TIMES ARE IN GOD'S HANDS . . . . .	228
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE DESIRE TO LIVE . . . . .	229
<i>The Yoke of Christ</i>	
IN THE GREAT EMERGENCY . . . . .	231
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
OUR LAST EARTHLY SERVICE . . . . .	232
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE DEATH OF CHRIST . . . . .	233
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE ANGUISH OF DEATH . . . . .	234
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE RIGHT VIEW OF DEATH . . . . .	235
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE RESURRECTION	
THE BASIS OF FAITH . . . . .	237
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
THE MIRACLE OF MIRACLES . . . . .	237
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE PLEDGE OF IMMORTALITY . . . . .	239
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
HEAVEN OUR HOME	
ACROSS THE CLOUDED BORDERLAND . . . . .	241
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	

# Contents

15

THE SILENCE OF CHRIST . . . . .	PAGE 241
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE FOLLY OF SPIRITUALISM . . . . .	242
* <i>The Gospel of Work</i>	
WHERE HEAVEN IS . . . . .	244
<i>The Gospel of Christ</i>	
THE GLORIFIED BODY . . . . .	247
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
A NEW WORLD . . . . .	247
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE FELLOWSHIP OF SAINTS . . . . .	249
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS . . . . .	250
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE SERVICE OF THE SAINTS . . . . .	251
<i>The Presence of Christ</i>	
HEAVEN ON EARTH . . . . .	253
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
A PERILOUS ASSURANCE . . . . .	254
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE DOOM OF UNBELIEF . . . . .	255
<i>The Tenderness of Christ</i>	
THE SPIRIT OF HOPE . . . . .	256
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
THE SECOND COMING . . . . .	261
* <i>The Gospel of Work</i>	

\* With the kind permission of Messrs. Sampson Low & Co. In the section "Sesame Grains" the passages marked with a \* are from the same volume.

	PAGE
LORD, TO WHOM SHALL WE GO? . . . .	261
<i>Questions of Faith and Duty</i>	
SESAME GRAINS . . . . .	261
<i>(passim)</i>	

## Christ the Lord over All.

### *The World and Christ.*

IF we ask what is at this moment the subject of keenest interest at home, judging from the literature, the conversation, and the struggle both behind and in front of us to-day, we reply, Religion. If, once again, we ask what is the force which is most ineradicable, and continuous, and irrepressible, and embarrassing for European statesmen, we say, Religion. Once again, if we inquire what is the special religion which modern thinkers and writers never can afford to leave alone, and which, while they profess to treat it as dead and done with, somehow they do not feel able to neglect and despise as they would other things in a like condition, but again and again return to examine, and attack, and once more assume to slay—it is the religion of

Christ. This Christ, whose figure fills the entire horizon of thought, who by His grandeur seizes our imagination, and by His tenderness wins our love, and by His life compels our homage, and by His cross soothes our conscience; who looks on and says nothing when men scoff at Him, but sufficiently proves Himself to those who really love Him—this Christ comes to us to-day, us who say, “What lack I yet?” and asks, in the words of the man who condemned Him, “What will you do with me?”

*Christ Pre-eminent.*

FALSE prophet or true, Son of God or only Son of Mary, a blasphemer or speaking the words of truth and soberness, reigning to-day King in Heaven or but a handful of dust in a Syrian grave, by the confession of His enemies to whom in spite of themselves He is an object of absorbing interest, with the acclamation of the disciples to whom the instant and entire recognition of all His claims is the



only explanation of His life that satisfies their reason, and the only issue of His death that stills their heart, Christ is everywhere pre-eminent. He is the centre of human attraction, the fountain of perfect morality, the character which meets all possible demands of the human conscience, the friend who attracts the secret sympathies of rich and poor, young and old; the prophet who has raised the world to a higher level than it ever dreamed of without Him, the Saviour who from some that read these lines has earned a gratitude which eternity will indeed reveal, never exhaust.

### *The Claim of Christ.*

THE claim of Christ—and it is an unspeakably lofty one—is that He reveals God. To see Christ is to see God in the closest and tenderest and deepest of relationships—that of Father. If you ever want to know what God would think, or feel, or say, or do, or order, or bestow, or deny under any given circumstances, look

into the Gospels, and let Christ give the answer. The sum of it is this: God in Himself, and by the reason as well as by the senses undiscoverable, is to be seen and known only in His Son. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

*Christ His own Religion.*

JESUS CHRIST is His own religion. A personal Christ approached, contemplated, accepted, is at once the vision of God, the present fruition of eternal life, the final satisfaction of man. He has made us, and He understands what He has made. He has redeemed us, and He will not easily surrender what it cost Him such anguish to win.

*The Assent of the Will.*

IT is the will that lays hold of Christ, the personal will cleaving to the personal Lord. The mind may have its conception

of His glory and the conscience may tremble at His holiness, and the heart throb with the sense of His tenderness. But until the will is yielded there is no vital, actual union between the soul and Christ, and He will not force the will. He can only appeal to it, and help it.

*The Reason Baffled.*

FOR Reason the difficulties that encumber the hypothesis of Jesus still asleep in the tomb are perhaps even more serious than those which surround the dogma of His resurrection. This Jesus still dead means that our nature is a riddle, our hope a delusion, and our future an abyss.

*The Necessity of Faith.*

IF the senses are to be the final tribunal of spiritual truth for mankind, Jesus Christ vanishes into the invisible; and when we go out to look for Him, "it is night." Faith is the only organ by which the soul can discover God, or enjoy Him. To

decline to believe is to be unable to adore.

*The Disaster of Lost Faith.*

ALL that the religion of Christ has given the world, is still giving it, must go, if faith goes. The serene and sweet elevation of conduct and life that comes from the hope of immortality—that must go ; and it would be worse than death to millions of beautiful lives. The absorbing and regenerating forces that flow from the contemplation of Jesus Christ—His life, and death, and words, and character : these will be all dried up, as a river when it is lost in the sands, and with nothing in its place. For these friends of ours, who ruthlessly cut down the Tree of Life before our eyes, tell us while they do it that they know of no other to plant in its place. That indeed is not their business. “Your Jesus of Nazareth was but a beautiful dreamer. Get rid of your dreams ; live at your best ; then face death, without hope or fear.”

And yet two more things must go—go for ever—if faith goes. I mean morality and benevolence. I do not say that all morality will go, or instantly go. Society will always have self-interest enough to know how to protect life and property. Civilisation of a certain sort in material things, perhaps increasingly refined and complete, will always remain. Nay, for generations there may remain the subtle and inextinguishable aroma of the recollection of Christ. But purity—you must not expect to keep that, if you banish from your homes and your lives Him whose first great beatitude was pureness of heart; whose religion was the first among men to declare that the body is the temple of God. Unchristianised England would soon need a second Juvenal to scarify the world's conscience with the revelation of her ineffable guilt. "Purity is one of those things which Christian ideas and influences produced; it is a thing which they alone can save." And philanthropy would perish when there was nothing to feed it with. Rome, Athens, Sparta knew nothing

of the hospital or the workhouse, of kindness to the poor, or pity for the orphan. To lose faith might, indeed, be to get free from restraints that curb licence, and from shadows that check levity, and from a holy presence that is a felt barrier to self-will, and from the thought of a judgment swift to righteousness. But you would have in its place—and it is doubtful if it would be as well worth having—wives whom you could not trust, children whom you would not train; toil with no Sabbath; poverty with no almsgiving. As for the Bible—would the starched primers of science help the weary to be patient and the tempted to be steadfast? Partings by the grave would have no sweet hope of a tearless and sinless meeting. An age of reason, certain of its reaction in a gloomy, and perhaps cruel superstition, would have its earliest harvest in an elysium of vice.

“When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” Such is our peril; from which good Lord deliver us!

*Christ in His Humanity.*

THE Lord's natural disposition, as the Gospels make it abundantly evident, was not of that impassive, unemotional, phlegmatic kind which implies a sort of moral imperviousness to injustice or opposition, and which creates a sort of temperate zone in which tropical storms or arctic icebergs neither wreck nor freeze. He longed for human sympathy. He missed, and once noticed, when they were denied Him, the courtesies of social life. He was stirred to the depths of His soul by formalism, cruelty, and injustice. On the Pharisees His indignation blazed in sentences that gleam with fire. Though we never find Him confessing sin, whether in word or in deed, whether in omission or commission, to God or to man, He delighted in unfolding His plans to His disciples, and in receiving, not indeed their advice, which He never asked for, but their reflections, which showed Him as well as themselves what was passing in their minds. His moral sense was full of pores, sensitive to every

passing circumstance. A nature such as His must have been peculiarly liable to lose its moral equilibrium; and whether by the taunts of enemies or the dulness of friends, become unbalanced and out of control. . . . His sinlessness must not only be explained by the protecting environment of His Godhead sheltering His humanity, united to it in the one personality, from all breath or chance of sin. Were this all the account of the case, how could He have been tempted in all things as we are? How could He, in the fulness of a personal sympathy, succour us who are tempted to-day? Rather it was by the unfailing presence of the Holy Ghost vouchsafed to Him without measure at His baptism, and in absolute harmony with the freedom of His human nature, illuminating His mind with truth, inspiring His will with duty, inflaming His heart with love, elevating His conscience with devotion. It is a great mystery, this human life, this sinless perfection, this offering of Himself without spot to God by One who was perfect God and perfect man; a mystery full of won-



derful teaching for reverent intelligences ; a mystery, also, about which we only possess scanty though priceless hints.

*“ Tempted like as we are.”*

THE temptation in the wilderness, of which He Himself must have given the narrative to the Apostles (who else could have given it ?) is confessedly only an episode in a continually tempted life. The Evangelist, indeed, expressly records that the devil departed from Him *for a season*. In the garden and on the cross we feel sure that He was assaulted again.

*Man's Intellectual Freedom.*

WHAT He seemed most to dread was any coercing of the will of His hearers, so as not to leave them perfectly free in the weighing and handling of what He said to them. He aimed at convincing them, not compelling them. He never gave them evidence enough to constrain their intellectual assent, for then there would have

been no moral value in it. A man is neither better nor worse for admitting that two sides of a triangle are greater than a third. If he has a mind at all, he cannot help admitting it. . . . Our Lord never intended, and the Church must never claim it, that the evidence, whether for His doctrine or His claims, should be irresistibly, overwhelmingly strong. Christ drew—never drove. For what He said was this: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

## The Follower of Christ.

### *The Law of Self-surrender.*

LET us face this doctrine, that for all followers of Christ, whoever and wherever they may be, the one and essential and inestimable law is that of *self-surrender*.

This was the very essence and substance of Christ's teaching, again and again declared in language of almost awful sternness. Yet, so far from shocking men by its extravagance, or repelling them by its austerity, it actually drew multitudes to His feet. . . . All religions claim their sacrifices — some hideous, repulsive, and cruel to the last degree. Certainly there is nothing unnatural in it ; for the human spirit when summoned to sacrifice for a cause worthy of it, and by a voice that has a right to be heard, often feels a lofty joy in rendering it, and finds it easier to give all than to grudge half. If in our easy modern Christianity there seems a grotesque exaggeration in pressing the law of sacrifice on those who appear to have no great scope for obeying it ; if a preacher seems walking on stilts in an age of Christian liberty, when using words awfully intelligible when men were flung to the lions for their faith, but hardly with a meaning now, when half the world is contemptuously indifferent to what the other half believes : put into language nearer to

us, it means that what a Christian man has to lay down on the altar of his God is his self-will, in everything that concerns him ; that to be truly, and continually, and ardently in love with goodness, and occupied with helping others into it, is the most complete account of the Christian spirit.

*Humanity on the Cross.*

WHILE in our regenerate nature we dwell with our Lord from Heaven in the heavenly places, abiding in His body ; in the flesh, that is, in our old corrupt nature, we are on the Cross, and must remain there till we die. " They that are Christ's," says the Apostle, " have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." By all means ask what the sentence means. It is simply this. That so long as the flesh remains and our corrupt affections war and lust in our members, for us to come down from the Cross (in other words, to be spared the divine discipline) might be to give up the battle for goodness, and to go back to

our sins. Another way of putting it, perhaps a better way, is that the Cross on which our Lord did hang that He might expiate our sins, is the Cross on which we too must hang, that we may crucify and subdue them. The Cross, with every feature of it. The thorns must press our brow, that we may bring every thought into captivity to Him and to His purpose. The nails must be in our hands and feet, the organs of our daily activities, that they may be used only according to His will ; nay, if so He chooses, not to be used at all. The spear-thrust may have to pierce our heart. For sometimes even in our holiest and dearest affections He deliberately, though always with indescribable tenderness, wounds us, that we may flee unto Him to hide us, and adore Him more fervently than ever, with the pure love of greatly chastened souls. Occasionally He visits us with an awful loneliness ; a sense of utter isolation ; a sad and pitiful mournfulness creeping over the spirit, to compel us to seek Him, who alone in all the world perfectly understands us, and will cover

our head in the day of battle. After all, this is only the reversed side of what the Lord elsewhere said Himself: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Actually it comes to the same thing. If we are to carry the Cross in some real fashion, does it much matter whether we are on the Cross, or the Cross on us; whether it is borne on our back, or we nailed to it? God forbid that we should preach a gospel of asceticism. God also forbid that we should shrink from a gospel of holiness. Yet holiness can come to us only through a divine education of our spirits, conveyed and interpreted and blessed to us, usually through circumstances, by His own infinite grace.

### *The Habit of Sacrifice.*

LET us be sure of this, that no life deserving the name of Christian can ever exist, without the law and habit of sacrifice, in some degree at least, colouring and dominating it. Also, that the secret of its

freedom and progress, of its continuousness and expansion, of its beauty and its influence, will be, must be, in exact proportion to the sincerity of our struggle with self. . . . But the only way to become capable of lofty sacrifices is first to begin with humble ones. The doing of the little duties at our own house door, the love of our neighbour, perhaps uninteresting and rather stupid, are the first steps in the ladder of goodness, at the top of which sparkles the martyr's crown. For there are martyrs now, who live out their quiet years, die in their beds, wear every-day clothes, enjoy homely worship, yet lay their lives at their Heavenly Master's feet as fully and as acceptably as either Ignatius or Ridley. It is the habit of making sacrifices in small things that enables us for making them in great, *when it is asked of us*. Temper, love of pre-eminence, bodily indulgence, the quick retort, the keen irony—in checking these, let us find our cross and carry it. Or when the moment comes for some really great service, the heart will be petrified for it, and

the blinded eyes will not see the occasion of love.

*The Sense of Sin.*

LET no one trifle with sin, or presume on God's forbearance about it, or think it does not matter, or that pardon can come whenever it is convenient to ask for it. "The agony and the bloody sweat, the cross and the passion," are the measure as much of God's unspeakable horror of sin as of His boundless pity for sinners. . . .

The sense of sin, if we would avoid unreality and a sort of complacency in our humbleness, should ever be accompanied with a continuous and strenuous effort to overcome it. So-called mourning for sin is a nauseous and perilous affectation, if it does not also mean a firm resolution to put it away. St. Paul never forgot his past—"who was a persecutor, and injurious;" "not meet to be called an apostle because I persecuted the Church of God." Yet he could also say, "I laboured more abundantly than they all." We need not



forget that we have sinned, if only we have cause to believe we are forgiven. We may be perfectly clean, though imperfectly holy.

*The Vitality of Sin.*

It never can be quite the same thing, no, not even in eternity, to have sinned, as not to have sinned ; however profound the repentance, complete the conversion, devoted the service, edifying the life. A blameless past must always be better than a stained one. It is blessed to repent and to be forgiven ; but blessed, oh ! far blessed, is it never to have left our Father's house at all, and to have been preserved in a pure youth and an upright manhood. *Every one and everything is worse for sin.* For sin goes on scattering its contagions and harvesting its results long after it has been confessed, forsaken, and forgiven—nay, long after he who has sinned has joined the white-robed throng. To some this thought of the terrible, and, in a sense, unending, vitality of sin, would

be almost intolerable, if they could not somehow leave it with Him, who, in forgiving, knows what He has forgiven, and has other ways, we trust, of preventing, and healing, and finally overcoming evil, than those He has been pleased to reveal.

*The Penalty of Sin.*

It was when the feast was over, and the calf eaten, and the robe and ring put away, and the drudgery of the field and the stall had to begin afresh, that the Prodigal found his penalty to endure, and his shame to suffer. His father's love assuredly made the pain keener; his brother's estrangement daily made his sin rise up before his face. All through life we, too, are finding out our sin, and coming to understand its sinfulness, and to hate its loathsomeness, and to fathom its deceitfulness, and to endure its anguish, and to discover its shame. This cannot come all at once; for only circumstances fully reveal it, and they happen slowly. It grows with the knowledge of God, and with the discovery of

self, with further contact with men ; often, it must be added, through the misconduct of our children. Repentance which begins in the will presently suffuses and permeates the entire moral being ; and as the soul puts off its mortal vesture, the best thought to deepen its peace is, that it is passing into the sinless land.

*Repentance and Penitence.*

NOT always is there an adequate appreciation of the vital distinction between repentance and penitence. Repentance is the first glance at the glory of a righteous God, grieved and angry at our sin. Penitence is the continuous vision of His holy face, in sympathy with His abhorrence of evil, and accepting His methods of overcoming it. Repentance is the quick and sudden spasm of a heart into which God's arrow has penetrated, eagerly, impatiently, asking for the wound to be healed. Penitence is the lifelong and growing knowledge of the inner corruption of nature, and of the awful " depths of Satan " which

constantly stirred it into life. Repentance is the awakening of the consciousness of sin ; and penitence is the ever-deepening abhorrence of its sinfulness. Repentance resolves on amendment. Penitence confirms and perfects it in walking humbly with God. Repentance may be quite sincere ; it may be acceptable so far as it goes, and a genuine work of the Spirit of God, and even fruitful in an entire and permanent conversion, while through such causes as scanty leisure, incessant pressure, shallow and emotional teaching, and a lack of sustained meditation, it remains altogether on the surface of the soul, and has never penetrated into its inner chambers, nor seen God face to face to praise Him in His holiness.

*Gilgal, Bethel, and Jordan.*

EACH of us has his Gilgal, and his Bethel, and then his Jordan. His Gilgal, where at the beginning of life God summons him to His work, crowns and endows him for it, tries him ; and if he fails, takes

it from him, and gives it to a better. His Bethel, when God visits the young soul, and gives it His assurance of provision, His smile of welcome, His sense of protection, His promise of fatherly love, and then sends it on. His Jordan, the end of life, whether long or short, bright or dull, defeat or victory, shame or glory, whether approached suddenly or seen from afar, whether recognised with a shudder of fear or welcomed as the thought of home.

## The Inner Life.

### *God's Fatherhood.*

GET your entire spiritual being simply impregnated with the idea of *God's fatherliness*. This is the one unfailing key to all the problems of life—its denials and its bountifulness, its sunshine and its storm, its voices and its silence. . . . Father though He be, He does not undertake to explain everything to us. When we grieve Him, we must not wonder that His face is

turned away. Sometimes He cannot spare us anguish, sometimes He must keep us in weary suspense; often, indeed, it may have occurred to some of us that among the untold blessings of children, not quite the least is that we are helped to understand God's dealings with us so much more clearly, through viewing them in the light of an earthly parent's conduct to his child. Our pity, and tenderness, and patience, and yet inexhaustible love, with sometimes real displeasure, and a heart sore and torn, may help us to see how our Heavenly Father feels towards ourselves. For human nature is created on the lines of the divine. Were it not, how could we understand it, how be blessed in partaking of it? O let us learn to trust and wait; never to fear asking Him, if only we ask dutifully; never to think that we can disturb Him with all our cares and troubles, if only we leave them behind, when we rise from our knees; to tell Him first, and also last, about everything that concerns us; to feel it impossible that He can ever be unjust or un-

kind, or impatient, or weary. Even when He chastens us, let us try to love Him through all the anguish. Even when He does not speak to us, let us be assured that presently the answer will come, and the right one. This is what we like our children to be and to feel with us; let this be our mind towards God.

*Trials of Faith.*

THE trial of faith in God's Fatherliness is no strange thing to the child of God. Most of us have felt it already, and many of us will feel it again. We are told that God is love, and we have intensely, joyfully believed it, and we have pressed it on others whose hearts were breaking. Some woful morning dawns, when He does to us what we could not conceive ourselves doing to our worst enemy. We ask with some of old, "Lord, carest Thou not that we perish?" At such moments—the crises are not frequent—we are to see, and hear, and trust, and cling to God in Christ. "No man hath seen God at

any time. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Christ, in all that God did to Him, in all that He accepted from God, is the revelation both of the Father and of the Son. In Him we must hide till the bitterness is past, to Him cling, that the Eternal God may be our refuge. At such moments our stammering prayer must be, "O Lord Jesus, pour the divine love into me! Hold me, I am too weak to cling; teach me, I am too weak to pray. 'Show me the Father.' My heart is dead, but Thou art greater than my heart and knowest all things. Thine own words shall be my words; only help me truthfully and reverently to utter them: 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?'"

*When God Hides His Face.*

A LOSS of the *sense* of God's favour does not of necessity imply a loss of the favour itself, and among the manifold and disciplinary processes of the divine correc-



tion a shadowed and lonely experience has a foremost, an intentional place. . . . What is meant by the darkness in which one who fears God and does His will is permitted, even ordained, to walk by One who has expressly told us that joy is to be in the dwellings of the righteous, and that His own joy is to be His people's strength?

First of all the darkness may be of an intellectual character, and may affect the very acceptance of a revelation from God. . . . God does not demonstrate Himself, or there would be no such thing possible as faith. Perhaps to see God there must be a sort of moral affinity that makes us desire Him. Few things to a soul truly longing to walk in the light of God's countenance are more disturbing, some would even say more agonising, than even the bare possibility that there may be no God after all whom human spirits can know, hear, worship, resemble, serve, love, with any adequate sense of security that they are not pursuing a shadow, which their own fancy has projected on the invi-

sible world. Such doubts are not sins ; some would go so far as to say that they are not even temptations ; but to pure and devout souls they are an unspeakable and awful trial. The very truthfulness of a man's intellectual nature seems to turn against him and torment him as he lies stretched on the rack of this awful conflict.

This darkness is also created for some of us by the perplexing nature of God's moral government of the world. . . . An earnest man wishes to understand all about God. God does not promise anything of the kind this side the grave, but claims to be trusted. If He were to make everything plain to us, the probability is that we should be no better off than before. If we cannot trust Him, we only make the outside darkness darker, and extinguish the light which faith would bring into the soul.

There is another sort of darkness. It is the darkest and saddest of all. I mean the darkness of the soul which feels deserted by the presence of the Lord ; which clings, but feels nothing to cling to ;

which prays, but no sense of being heard comes back to help and cheer; which loves, and pleads, and waits, and all is like winter at the Pole. Sometimes this comes towards the close of life, sometimes in the midst of its activities; sometimes the preacher almost feels himself a hypocrite in promising consolations which he does not taste himself; sometimes the troubled spirit, bereft of everything else but its Lord, at last seems to be bereft of all that made other losses tolerable, other silences beautiful. If God goes, the universe goes. "Let me die, I am no better than my fathers."

The greatest and the strongest have passed through these deep waters, and the deepest and the bravest know no immunity from it. It is the consolation of consolations that the Son of God, at the moment when He was expiating the world's sin and manifesting His Father's love to the universe, lost the sustaining sense of His presence, and mourned for it with a cry that still echoes in the conscience of the world. If God hid Himself

from His Son on the cross, it was not because He did not love Him, but because He desired that all down the ages that exceeding bitter cry should be the typical utterance of filial trust in the Eternal Father.

*The Sense of Possessing God.*

LET us clearly distinguish between the joy of possessing God and the joy of the sense of possessing Him. One is the essence, the other is the accident ; the one is salvation, the other comfort. Our religion needs robustness ; we must not expect sweetmeats or cordials as daily food. Barley-bread and two small fishes were the food of the Apostles, and must be ours. Of course, I remember that in the trouble I am writing about there is frequently not only the sense of loss, but even of estrangement ; not merely that there is no smile on the Father's face, but that there is the felt shadow of a frown. It is not midnight, it is darkness at noonday. Still God is, and He is ours. His perfections, His

government, His purpose, are unchanged. Nothing can rob us of the exquisite revelation of His past mercy, and who shall separate us from the everlasting arms of His love? "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him;" "If I die, I will die clinging to the cross."

Lastly, this depression and loneliness, though real, acute, absorbing, are only for a time, and affect not the substance of our life, but the surface of it; not our inheritance in God, but our enjoyment of its bliss. By patience, by cheerfulness, by sympathy, by going out of ourselves to comfort and help others, by forgetting our own misery in promoting the kingdom of God, we manifest God's faithfulness, and (without knowing it) we help ourselves on to the end of the cloud. "At evening time it shall be light."

#### *Goa's Answer to Doubt.*

How often the true heart, self-reproaching just because it is true, is tormented by the doubt, born out of a sense of its own

unworthiness, of the simple impossibility for the holy Saviour to love one so vile, so worthless as itself! The way of life is a narrow way indeed, lying between the two quicksands of presumption and despair; and, according to our individual nature and the circumstances which happen to us, the tempter tempts us to either one or the other. And either way is death. Well, no amount of self-introspection, and no experience of human infirmity will ever succeed in convincing a sincere heart that it is worthy of Christ's love, or that it could ever hope to be through the sacrifice of a thousand lives. If, then, I am told to know and believe the love of God to me, and yet can find no cause in myself why He should love me, where am I to look, and what am I to do? The answer is—and it is the voice of the Father—"My child, look unto me and be saved. I love thee because my hands have made and fashioned thee; because thou art the thought of my will, and the object of my mercy, and the manifestation of my glory. I love thee because I have bought thee

with the blood and the passion of my beloved Son. Know and believe it; and be at rest." The simple, mighty, incredible, yet absolute truth is this: God loves us, because it has so pleased Him; and there is no other account to give of it, reason and argue as we may. On the Eternal purpose, on the Incarnate life, on the accomplished sacrifice, on the final victory rest at once the motive of God's love, the fact of Christ's redemption, the assurance of our own place in the Father's house as children and heirs.

*Christ's Love for the Individual Soul.*

LET us confess that it is hard to appreciate the separate personal love of the Saviour to each individual soul. Reason may inflexibly decline to accept it; and, but for the instinct that compels to prayer, and the experience that recognises that prayer is answered, the thought of the heart, that it is known and cared for by God, might well be scouted as the dream of a presumptuous and silly egotism. But

the corporate life of the entire society, and the separate personality of each individual member of it, are essential to each other as the only complete account of the spiritual condition of mankind. "Bear ye one another's burdens"—and "every man shall bear his own burden," are the two poles of Christian fellowship and personal responsibility. Christian readers, to each of you I dare to say, I rejoice to say, in the name of Him to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid—that Christ loves you with a separate, and individual, and complete, and discriminating love, as if there were no other being in the universe on whom His love could rest; that He loves you in spite of your unworthiness, and your insignificance, and unprofitableness, and self-reproaches; that He did not begin to love you because you were good, but because He wished to make you good; He did not love you because you were doing so much for Him, but because He meant to bid you and help you to try.



*The Sin of Distrust.*

It is such an awful sin, with Calvary in the far distance, for one moment to doubt the boundless love of God. Of that sin—that sin of sins—may we never be guilty; may our last years be full of fruitfulness through patience of suffering, and brightness of temper, and steadfastness of devotion, and immovableness of faith! If He hide His face from us, still we will trust Him. If He smile on us, and bring summer into our heart, we will praise Him, for light is pleasant to the soul. If He send us pain, we will not ask Him to remove it, if that might be to lose an opportunity for glorifying Him, but we may and we will ask for strength to bear it.

*Devoutness.*

THE meaning of devoutness is personal adoring filial love to God the Father, as revealed in His Son Jesus Christ. It is not, in the usual acceptation of the word, the invariable accompaniment of living

faith in the soul ; for there are many sincere and excellent persons, walking in the fear of God and in the light of conscience, of whom to speak as devout would be to describe them inaccurately, if not altogether untruly. It is by no means always found in company with a great amount of accurate doctrinal knowledge ; for it was when Mary Magdalene was weeping over her lost Lord, whom she thought to be stolen but could not believe to be risen, that her Saviour, recognising her devoutness, rewarded it by the revelation of Himself. It may be called the enthusiasm of personal religion, springing from a fervent and affectionate nature, going out after God, and cleaving to Him and delighting in Him, not so much for what He gives as for what He is ; prizing above all His gifts the constant sense of His sanctifying presence, desiring above all His graces the power of loving Him more as He deserves. In David's own words, it is thirst for God, for the living God, the longing to go and appear before God ; it is also the unutterable adoration

of a soul that throbs and burns with the very fire of heaven, the emotion of a heart that would multiply itself a hundredfold only to give all to Him.

*Meditation.*

IF prayer is the worship of the heart, meditation is that of the mind. Pascal has said, "Thought makes the greatness of men." Why is there so little meditation among Christians, such a lack of that quietness, and stillness, and thoughtfulness of soul and spirit, in which chiefly the dews of the Holy Spirit fall on us, and the life of Christ grows? There is much activity of hands and feet, much listening, far too much talking. Yet where the heart is, there the treasure is ; and it is in human nature to think of what we love.

*Contemplation.*

AGAIN, a great help to devoutness in this restless and distracting age is contemplation. It may be distinguished from

meditation as being the attention of the mind and heart to a person rather than to a truth; and while meditation may be defined as the pondering of the spirit on some divine doctrine, with (so to speak) closed eyes and abstracted senses, contemplation is the adoring gaze of the believing and worshipping heart on the glory of its Lord and King. "Out of sight, out of mind," is a truth true in many ways. If we never set Christ Himself preaching on the mountains of Galilee, dying on the cross, glorified at His Father's right hand, before our heart and imagination, we must expect only faintly to realise all that He has suffered, all that He is now doing for us; and the result will be our spiritual loss. To look on Jesus with the purified eye of faith and love, though it may be a rare, is a truly blessed mean of grace. There is a sense in which even now we may see, if we will, our King in His beauty; and if in the day of His return we are to be made like Him in body as well as in soul through seeing Him as He is, we may become spiritually

like Him now through contemplating His person, and meditating on His work, and pondering His character, and feeding on His words.

*The Striving for Holiness.*

WE read of holiness by faith, and truly there is no holiness without faith. Yet this is only one-half of the truth. Salvation is the free gift of the spontaneous grace of God. Yet the Apostle, who lays such stress both on the act of the divine love that bestows it, and on the simplicity of the human faith that receives it, also impresses on us, with language almost of austerity, that we must work out this salvation with fear and trembling at the thought of our indwelling and sanctifying God. Holiness must come by effort, and watchfulness, and contemplation of divine truth, and loving desire, and habitual self-restraint, and the quiet, steady postponement of self, and the joyful use of those divinely appointed ordinances through which grace flows into the soul.

*Are We in Earnest?*

WE talk about holiness, and we admire it, and we press it on others, and with lip-service at least we affect to lament the lack of it in ourselves. But are we so sure that we really and deeply care for it? Are we ready to practise that inward discipline of spirit, without which it can only be a vain dream? The Spirit comes to us by the hearing of faith; and in this sense it is that holiness comes by faith. It is equally true that it will never come to those who are content with hearing it preached about, but whose only actual approach to it is in the perilous luxury of books of devotion. Prayer means hard work, and holiness is hard work; and we shall never come to resemble or enjoy God by sitting on a sofa and feebly sighing after it.

*Holy Communion.*

REMEMBER one special word of His. It may help you more than you think of, if only with sincerity and humility you take

it into your life and make it the secret of your power. I mean His parting command, to partake of His broken body and His poured-out blood in the ineffable mystery of the Eucharist. . . . For hope deferred and plans disappointed, for parted hearts that pine for reunion, for unsatisfied desires that never can be accomplished here, there is the joyful hope of the Resurrection, which sheds the mild splendour of the glory to come on the devout heart as it adores the Saviour. Are we lonely, and feel that loneliness is weakness? There is the society of the faithful in the Communion of Saints. Do our conscious shortcomings depress us? The pardon that heals and the peace that soothes, the presence that inspires and the power that invigorates, the rest of the heart that has seen God and the joy of the heart that has felt the light of His countenance—these are all here.

*Frequency of Holy Communion.*

As to the objection, so frequently, and not at all unreasonably, made to a frequent reception of it, on the ground of our losing blessing through a greater familiarity with it, may we not thereby be doubting, though quite unconsciously, God's wisdom in ordaining this privilege, and mistrusting His power to prevent His ordinance falling short of His purpose to bless? Of course, it must always be a matter of individual discretion how often it may be expedient to partake of this ordinance; and while we are careful to reserve to ourselves the free exercise of our own judgment, the same liberty must be granted to our brethren. Still, it is certain that from not fully appreciating the blessedness, and apprehending the meaning, and using the opportunities, and welcoming the grace of this sacrament, some of us fall short of God's offers of blessing; for, while it strengthens faith, and quickens love, it also animates hope. The memorial of the Cross is also the promise of the glory; and they who at the



Lord's table on earth love to show forth their *Lord's death till He come*, are surely more likely than others to be looking forward to the glorious moment when they will be called to sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

### *The Place of Ordinances.*

LET us be jealously on our guard against whatever may tend to put the ordinances of Christ in the place of Christ, as if they were the indispensable ducts of His grace not to be had without them. Christ and Christ alone is the food of man.

### *Christ's Independence of Ordinances.*

SOMETIMES we may believe (and it is wholesome to be reminded of it) our Lord visits and blesses us, quite independently of any channels and ordinances at all. Most believing men can recall moments of blessedness, of divine nearness and communion, of indisputable accessions and visitations of grace, which have lingered

in the soul for years, with an indescribable and hallowing fragrance, which came and went, we knew not why, but that the Lord willed it so. He is not bound by means, and He has times and seasons in His own hand; but usually He honours them, and He delights to meet us in His temple.

*Aridity of Soul.*

I KNOW how hard prayer is almost at all times; how glad we sometimes feel to be able to say anything; that our best prayers ever fall short of our true aspirations; that our worst prayers are often so cold, so feeble, so poor, so wandering, they hardly deserve to be called prayers at all. And it is the humbling personal knowledge of the inadequacy and shortcomings of his own prayers, that may well make a Christian writer pause, before he raises a standard that he himself so very inadequately reaches unto, as well as shrink from making a heart sad, which God would not make sad, by inviting prayer, which to many would seem so distant and

so impracticable as only to reduce them to despair. Yet prayer is a habit; and the more we pray, the better we shall pray; and the highest mountain can be climbed by steady, patient walking; and if we never set a mark before us to aim at and try for, we may soon discover that nothing is so perilous to the soul's life as contentedly sitting still.

*Spiritual Consolations.*

WITH most of us the consolations of God are small when they might be, are meant to be, large. For, first of all, even when a man has no wish to harden himself in his grief, yet, though he may be content to be helped by man, he may refuse to be comforted by God. There is sometimes a resentment within him, a sense of inequity and wrong, which tempt him to hard thoughts of One who, he always thought, called Himself Father, but who is putting him to intolerable anguish without sufficient cause. We all of us know something of this feeling. Even if it

passes, it visits us. With some it lingers, by others it is instantly rejected as an injury and dishonour. Some never escape from it till they die. Moreover, we are all apt to forget that the consolations of God chiefly flow to us through the sympathies of men; that the glance of infinite compassion, the pressure of the trembling hand, the silence so full of wisdom and tact, the bright radiant smile of faith and hope, the kneeling down for the quiet intercession that may not be uttered, the kiss of peace, and the wrestling in prayer afterwards for the wounded sufferer left alone in the darknes of the blinding and crushing loss, are all from God and through Him—His gift, His consolation, though in the shape of the ministries of men.

### *Spiritual Sloth.*

NINE out of every ten human beings are naturally disposed to be intensely idle; and this idleness creeps over the renewed nature, and lulls it into drowsiness and

sloth. We are often too idle for the effort of sustained prayer. We are often too idle, steadily and thoughtfully to study our Bibles. We are often too idle to interest ourselves in bearing the burdens or healing the sorrows of those around us. We are often too idle for anything much more than listening to rousing sermons, and occasionally attending a meeting for missions, and—being “scarcely saved.” Unbelief is at the root of it. If we really believed that God, of, and by, and in Himself, could make us happy; if we could learn to trust Him, and be content with Him, apart from His gifts, in the deep conviction that He is more and better than them all; if, in our jealousy for His honour, and in our appreciation of His character, and in our sympathy with His purposes, and in our gratitude for His Cross, we could come to have more of His mind about sin, more to understand His intense hatred and horror of it, more, with Him, to pity and yearn over the lost, more to perceive and know that the very greatest loss a human being can suffer is the loss of His image and

presence, I do think we should more cheerfully and readily cast ourselves into His arms, and yield ourselves to His purposes ; we would say more continually, more fervently, more honestly, than most of us can say now, " Do what Thou wilt with me, only love me : and give me the power of loving Thee in return ! "

*Lukewarm Christians.*

IF that considerable number of professing Christians who are continually lamenting their want of love to Christ and God, would really and thoroughly search their hearts about it, some of them might discover, that they have already as much of God's love as they have any right to expect ; and that the amount which they feel to possess, whether of a sense of His love to them, or theirs to Him, is, as a matter of fact, in exact proportion to their real efforts after it. *To be safe* is practically the end and aim with which tens of thousands of professing Christians sit down in an ignoble contentedness. Not to be

punished for sin, not to be shut out of heaven, not to be refused the comfortable persuasion of peace with God, not to be left knocking at the door of God's mercy uncertain if we shall ever be let in,—this is what too many people look upon as the goal of the Christian's race, and the substance of his assurance, and the reward of his faith, and the pledge of his victory. Whereas it is but the starting-point, and not the conclusion ; the earnest, but not the fulfilment, of his salvation. To be delivered from sin, in the love and power of it, is really of far more importance, both for God and us, than that we should be set free from the fear of hell, essential as that is to the liberty and cheerfulness of our service ; and to be made fit for heaven, is the only possible condition on which we could enjoy its blessedness, or mix in its society, or do its works, or adore its Lord. It is no doubt a most blessed thing to feel safe ; yet certainly it is neither the loftiest nor the most elevating sentiment even of human nature ; and to rest content with our sense of safety, comparatively indifferent

to the glory of the kingdom of Him who has saved us, is to fall very short indeed of our Redeemer's purpose for us, is to know nothing of the spirit of the Apostle, whose one constraining motive, both of gratitude and obedience, was love to Him who died and rose again.

*The Value of Fasting.*

BISHOP PHILLIPS BROOKS has explained in one of the most suggestive of his sermons, that the value of fasting is twofold. It expresses repentance, and it uncovers the life to God. But some of us (among whom certainly in their day were not to be named John Wesley, Henry Martyn, or Samuel Walker of Truro) are startled at the word, as if it were a Roman austerity, which the spirit of the free life in Christ Jesus has exiled from the culture of the soul. It is plain, further, that very many Christian people would be both happier and holier if they were more circumspect and intelligent in systematically regulating their habits of speech and food,



their hours of retirement and devotion. Cannot we divine, by a sort of instinct, those who steadily aim at bringing all their common daily life into strict captivity to the law of Christ, often, no doubt, at the expense of some personal gratification, but with the result, in the end, of grace for themselves, and power upon the world? On no souls does the fresh dew of grace rest so visibly, from no characters does so much hidden virtue go forth to console and heal, as from those of us who walk closely with God in a hidden life of secret devotion and self-government; who, really longing after Christ's likeness, are not content with wishing for it, but strive after it with a firm purpose of soul.

### *Jealousy and Repining.*

WE need not envy others what God has given them and denied us, as if He were hard to us and kind to them. The same love that has in this instance given them what was safe for them, and denied us what was not safe for us, has, we may be

quite sure, also denied to them in other instances blessings, which they wish for but may not have, and the enjoyment of which they behold and envy in ourselves. God is just in His ways with all men ; but He is also wise and kind ; and knowing us better than we know ourselves, fully understanding how greatly we are affected by the outward events and conditions of life, He has ordered them with a view to our entire and final, not only our immediate, happiness ; and whenever we can be safely trusted with pastures that are green and waters that are still in the way of earthly blessing, the Good Shepherd leads us there.

### *Littleness of Soul.*

THERE is such a thing as smallness of heart and mind, which goes by the Latin word pusillanimity, a meanness of soul, which is preventable and remediable, which chills enterprise, depresses courage, invents difficulties, and empties pails of water on the fires of zeal. Few of us are quite free

from it. This meanness of spirit is quick to show itself in questioning the necessity or advantage of some philanthropic or Christian enterprise that may be brought under our notice, as well as in proving the absolute impossibility of accomplishing it, whether needed or not. Such persons are like the Disciples who, when Christ pitied the hungry multitudes, querulously objected that the wilderness was not the place in which to buy bread. Another variety is shown in a carping and ungenerous and illiberal treatment of those who differ from them in important particulars, such as those of Church government and ritual, while substantially one with them in the faith of the creeds and in zeal for the kingdom of Christ. Eccentricity of method, even though compensated by work which they could not do themselves and which few other people could do, frightens them out of their wits, as well as out of their charity. For divergence of doctrine from their own standards they have neither justice nor mercy, while they are unable to explain what voice from Heaven justifies them in

assuming that they are always in the right and their neighbours always in the wrong. One more variety of this small-mindedness is to be found in the cold though intelligible suspiciousness with which many sincere believers, who have never inquired, studied, or even doubted about the graver difficulties of Christian belief, regard those pioneers of truth who give their lives to what they feel to be the noblest cause on which their years can be spent, the criticism and interpretation of the Bible. . . . If our objection to such researches springs simply from the fact of their being seriously at variance with our own opinions, and we dislike them not because we can prove that they are wrong but because they compel us to be at the pains of modifying our present opinions, opposition becomes irrational and without meaning, and thereby we may be found fighting even against God.

*The Radiance of Humble Souls.*

THE salvation and illumination of the race does not so much depend on a little

company of gifted and splendid saints flashing like lighthouses at distant intervals over a vast and gloomy ocean, as on millions and millions of humble souls of whom the world is not worthy, shedding their gentle radiance like the stars in the clear sky on the busy if ungrateful earth below. To be good, to be kind, and be self-denying—this, so far as character can do it, is to reveal the Father and confess the Son. Glorified humanity will, perhaps, be chiefly made up of a mass of insignificant people who had humble duties, small resources, moderate gifts, slender opportunities, homely presence, and limited scope, but who were dear to God, humbly served their Saviour, and were faithful unto death.

*The Assurance of Experience.*

THE last step, and that which alone completes our knowledge of God, is to be able to say, I know both what God is in Himself, and what He can be to His people, not from books, nor from hearsay, nor merely from His account of Himself

in His Word, but simply from what He has Himself been to me. I am not reasoning myself into what I ought to feel; I feel from what I possess, and what no man can take from me, for no man gave it to me.

## The Bible.

### *Our Lord's Solace and Delight.*

WHAT Holy Scripture was to the human soul of our Lord the Gospels indicate; yet few of us, judging from our conduct, adequately appreciate it. Evidently it was His habitual solace and delight, the secret and delectable food of His vexed and weary spirit, the sword and shield of His continual resistance to the Tempter, the shadow of a great rock in the weary land of His life. In nothing is the example of Christ more notable or important, than in the way in which He quoted Scripture and appealed to it, whether to refute or confirm.

*The Range of Christian Study.*

THERE are some persons who, without the special excuse of but little leisure, go so far as to say that the Bible is the only book that Christians ought to study, other books involving but a waste of time. It may be sufficient to reply, that to impose this as a duty on all men alike is certainly to go beyond the letter of Scripture itself; that it is hardly consistent with the reasonable and justifiable cultivation of the various mental gifts and faculties with which God has endowed us, meaning us to use them, and that we are not particularly encouraged to it by any special largeness of mental vision or Christian charity in the few individuals who observe this rule themselves. It does not, however, follow, because the Bible is not the only book for Christians to study, that they might not study it much more than they do, and with much more pains, and diligence, and prayer. When we open our Bibles, quite as much as when we fall on our knees, we place ourselves in God's

immediate presence ; and we should read His Word both in the sense of listening to His voice and with the object of discovering His will. One hour's devotional study of Scripture will often do more than a dozen sermons to stir up in our hearts the love of God.

*Intellectual Temptations.*

BISHOP BUTLER, with that tenderness which sometimes characterises really great thinkers, has suggested that difficulties of belief may not only be permitted but intended for the temptation of characters of a certain type, to which coarser temptations would have no attraction. Let us not for a moment suppose that God discourages the use of reason. Why should He disown perhaps the noblest of His own gifts? Nor does He depreciate knowledge. The more we have of it, and of all sorts, the better. Nor does it displease Him, that we ask questions. Perhaps what He desires is, that we should ask more, if only they are of the sort that



can be answered. For to give us answers that would be beyond us, would be no kindness at all. But He would have us see that our faculties are of necessity limited; and that it is both our wisdom and our dutifulness to accept the limitation of them. In the sphere of Revelation, the laws of physical research have no place. The one indispensable method of educating the spiritual nature of man is faith. To recognise what we cannot explain, and to consent that it should not be explained, is the humility of true wisdom. To accept what we could not otherwise have known, on the authority of God's revealed Word, is the obedience of faith.

### *The Dangers of the Age.*

BEWARE of the tendency of thought on one hand which shall rob you of Jesus Christ as Son of God. Certainly if He goes, there is no one to take His place, and you may presently be feeling in a dumb and helpless despair, "Christ is lost to me, and I know not what to do without

Him." Beware also of the tendency of thought that would rob you of your liberty in Christ, and surrender you, body and soul, hand and foot, to an organised despotism, which, if claiming to protect you on one hand from slavery to the unreasonable dogmatism of science, only compels you to submit to another, the monstrous pretensions of an infallible man. Also, never suppose that there is anything exceptionally clever or magnificent in doubt as doubt.

*Delusive Confidence.*

PERHAPS the soul that has always the same amount of assurance about God, and of communion with Him, may have reason to doubt the soundness of the one, and even the existence of the other. While the soul, that, just because it is conscious of its own changeableness, rests on God's unchangeableness, shall learn habitually to look away from itself and all its faults and caprices, simply and uninterruptedly to rest upon the Lord.

## Religious Intolerance.

ALL of us are tempted in turn to be intolerant of other men's methods, over-critical of eccentric types of goodness, doubtful about unfamiliar formulæ, hasty to look askance at liberty we deny ourselves, merely because it would hurt us, and almost to refuse credence to a spiritual life that seems to live in another zone. Yet let us be humble and full of charity. God fulfils Himself in many ways, and what satisfies Him may be enough for His servants.

## Respect for Other Creeds.

To have a lofty, generous, frank, and trusty regard to those brethren who, if they cannot walk with us, are only on the other side of the road that leads to the Celestial City, who use our Bible, accept

our creeds, serve our Lord, seek our home—this should not be too hard for us, if we remember that those who are dear to Christ should be esteemed by us. There need be no mawkish insincerity, no affectation of a unity that does not really exist; simply the goodwill and trustful respect for those whom the laws of the human mind keep apart on this side eternity, but who, in the full light of the Lamb, shall meet and greet as friends.

## Baptism.

BAPTISM makes us members of Christ and incorporates us into His body. In affirming this, which for most of us is happily beyond controversy, we impose no arbitrary limitations on the divine compassion. We repudiate the cruel arrogance of denying to those who are outside the visible pale, through no fault of their own, either the favour of God or the possibility of living to His praise. But though we

will not speculate as to what we do not know, we will, we must, urge what we do know, both as duty and privilege, safety and blessedness. By Baptism we are admitted into the household of faith, and may claim all that the divine adoption includes, and in being children we are brethren.

## Religion in Daily Life.

### *Saintliness and Common Duties.*

AN enlightened religion has long ago discarded the fallacy that secular functions are inconsistent with the Christian standard ; in other words, has discovered that the essence of acceptable service consists in the motive of it, not only in the substance. For, of course, it cannot be safely inferred from a single instance, though no doubt it *has* been inferred again and again, that poverty is indispensable to saintliness ; or that the only way of confessing or following Christ is by an external and mechanical

imitation of His earthly life. It is certain that if in politics, and arms, and trade, and medicine, and literature, and jurisprudence, and the daily unprofessional career of free citizens, the principle were more distinctly recognised that God can be glorified everywhere by every one, the purpose more seriously cherished of seeking to please Him in the commonest duties of our earthly calling, the moral atmosphere of the entire community would be thoroughly impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel, and not only would Christ be preached every Lord's Day by those whose function it is to preach Him, but He would be lived every day in the week by those whose free and almost unconscious service would become a divine force among men.

*“ He knoweth our frame.”*

LET us never suppose that God cares only for the soul, and not also for the body ; that the temporal needs of His redeemed people are a matter of indifference to Him ; that the maintenance of a labouring man

can be beneath His notice who sent His own Son to work as a carpenter, or that a little child's happiness is uncared for by that eternal Father who has looked on His Christ as a helpless infant slumbering in a human mother's arms. God cares for everything that can affect His people ; and if not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him, then not the meanest slave that cries up to Him from the ends of the earth, not the most ragged child that honours His name, in the lowest London alley, is unseen by Him who redeemed all the world because He loved it all, and who has His own hidden ways of blessedly compensating the sorrows which He does not interpose to prevent, but which He is ever willing to sanctify and to heal.

*The Love of Life.*

LIFE with all its burdens and anxieties is still such a blessed thing, this earth with its ties, and pursuits, and objects, and possessions has so much in it to occupy, and fascinate, and gladden ; friends are so

kind, home is so happy, knowledge is so noble, nature is so fair, that, say as we will, think as we may that heaven is our home and this world a wilderness, were our health unbroken, and our tasks unfinished, and our energies fresh, and our homes full, we should follow with very reluctant steps, and moistened eye, and a heart looking behind us, the messenger that takes us away. We are meant to love life ; nay, we are made to love it. Love of life is no sin, it is merely a lower kind of love than a desire for the fruition of life eternal in the presence of the Lamb ; and the divine way of lifting us up from the lower level to the higher, without contradicting, on the one hand, God's purposes for our earthly service, or, on the other hand, crushing the beautiful human affections which are the features of God's own image in ruined yet not quite defaced souls, is by gradually weaning us from earthly things, rather than violently alienating us from them ; by correcting and elevating, rather than by destroying our natural instincts and capacities.



*The Christian and the Worldling.*

LIFE is the Christian's in a far higher and fuller sense than it is the worldly man's, since he enjoys it on a far higher level of blessedness, and uses it in a much nobler cause. Even death is his, since, though for a moment it triumphs over him, in the end he triumphs over it, and, while he seems to yield to it, he treads it under his feet. For it is the portal to life ; and, while our friends are weeping at our bedside, a chorus of angels welcomes us into Paradise. What the world dreads, the believer at last welcomes, for it severs us from sin, and takes us to the vision of God.

*Happiness and Peace.*

THE worldly man may have happiness without peace, and the Christian man peace without happiness. Happiness is often the result of mere characteristic buoyancy, of vigorous bodily health, of material prosperity, in company either

with the enthusiasm of youth, or the ardent activities of manhood ; and, while the utter absence of any deeper and more elevated feelings tends to make this happiness brighter and heartier, it is, nevertheless, the happiness of only the surface of our nature, perfectly compatible with irreligion, or viciousness, or selfishness, or vanity—subject at any moment to be terribly and hopelessly interrupted, and with nothing to fall back upon but the misery of its recollections.

Whereas peace is independent of the chances and changes of life, and can no more be disturbed by what men call misfortune, in its lofty dominion over the inmost spirit, than the depths of the ocean can be stirred by the winter gales that beat its surface into foam. Not only is it the gift of God, but it is His very presence. Sickiness cannot destroy it ; poverty cannot rob it of its incorruptible riches ; bereavement only makes it more real, and the approach of death more deep. The world, which cannot give it, cannot take it away ; its root is in the immovable assurance of

the divine acceptance and favour, through the blood and righteousness of the Saviour. It gradually spreads its roots over the entire spiritual being, through the sanctifying power of the eternal Spirit; and while the only thing that can ruffle it is the silent reproach of a wounded conscience, the only thing in all the world to destroy it is sin. Thus, though we may not always be able to say we are happy—there are times when it would not only be unnatural, but even wrong to be happy, such as when a child is dying, or when God has taken from us our work, and made us sit still with folded hands and closed lips—we may still have peace.

### *Divine Providence.*

THE doctrine of a Divine Providence, whatever we may understand by it, is peculiar to revealed religion. The deities of the Pagan world (as mythology describes them) interfered with the affairs of men only for vice or pride; and the philosophers who found themselves able

to acknowledge gods at all, preferred to think of them as dwelling apart from men in a stately and perhaps contemptuous repose. No doctrine more than this one of Divine Providence exalts God or dignifies man. It exalts God in setting forth at once His power and His goodness. It dignifies man in giving to each redeemed human being his own personal and inalienable position in the creation, and by placing the beggar and the king, the little infant and the man in his prime, the lonely widow and the powerful statesman, the decrepit pauper and the conqueror in a hundred battles, on the same level of entire equality before Him with whom is *no respect of persons*. It is in no feeble, unhealthy, self-loving, self-exalting spirit that a human being, first looking into himself and then looking up towards heaven, should ask with all reverence, but with all anxiety, "Does God care for me—will God help me?"

A Christian does not need to be reminded that He, without whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground, hath num-

bered the very hairs of his head. We have not so learned Christ from the history of His earthly life—we have not so seen the Father manifested in His Son, as to dare to do Him the crowning dishonour of doubting for a moment His full and tender sympathy for each one of His redeemed people, or of refusing to believe that He who made the worlds watches over a little child. If there is no limitation of infinite power, neither is there any of infinite love. God can, God will, God does care for us. The secrets of nature, the marvels of creation, the mystery of redeeming love, the individual experience of millions upon millions of reflecting and intelligent men—nay, almost every page of that Book which is luminous with the doctrine of a Divine Providence, and which, if the doctrine be false, must itself be the cruellest delusion that ever mocked mankind—each of these alone, all of these together, are a witness to the superintendence of God. In all things, and at all times, and for all needs, and under all difficulties, in things temporal and things spiritual, in the necessities of

the body and of the soul, in the choice of a profession, in the arrangement of a home, in work and in rest, in study and in holiday, in marrying and in giving in marriage, in the bringing up of children, in the selection of servants, in perplexities of business, in the entanglements of society, however small our cares may be, however insignificant our condition, however inextricable our confusion, however dark our future, *He knoweth the way that I take.*

*Special Providence.*

THE word "special," as applied to Providence, is often somewhat loosely used by those who do not sufficiently reflect on the logical consequences of the language they are using, and who, in their intelligible anxiety to recognise and adore the providential care and goodness which from time to time are mercifully conspicuous in their own case, feel tempted to describe it as a peculiar interposition for their sake, when it is but a prearranged element in a universal plan. If we insist on a so-called

“Special Providence,” as an exception to, and an interruption of, the method of general Providence, and on no other ground than that of our own consciousness (more alive to it, or more grateful for it, at some times than at others), it is difficult to evade the objection that with the all-wise, all-seeing God, there can be neither settled purpose nor predestined order; then there is one kind of government over us to-day, called general, and another over us to-morrow, called special. Surely, however, even in admitting the possibility of eccentricity and change in the divine counsels, we impeach the wisdom and complicate the operations of God. For some it is enough to believe that there is one uniform universal government over us all—always the same, always righteous and merciful, by night as well as by day, in quiet times as well as in troubled times, when we are not conscious of it as well as when we are; purposing our good, contriving our happiness, willing our sanctification. And though at some times more than at others we are impressed by its influence, or grate-

ful for its blessings, or solemnised by its judgments, it is the same government, on the same principles, of the same God, for the same end.

*Providence and Affliction.*

LIFE would be intolerable, could we not trace it in the plan of a Divine Providence watching over us and guiding us ; sorrow would be overwhelming, had we to look on it as a chance arrow shot against us at a venture, and not aimed by the hand of one whom we can trust and love. When God sends chastisement, He knows to whom He sends it, and why He sends it, and what He sends. His treatment of us is infinitely wise in its precise adaptation to the circumstances under which it is applied, to the result which it is intended to accomplish, and to the character which it is sent to sanctify. Some kinds of affliction, those, for instance, that are tedious and lasting, are in the nature of a systematic discipline and improvement, permanently to strengthen faith and hope and love in



us. Others, such as sharp and sudden trials, are tests sent to try what is in our heart, whether we serve God for Himself, or only for His gifts. If anything, so to speak, is providential, affliction is. If in anything whatever we are bound to trust God with all the completeness of our judgment, with all the strength of our understanding, with all the adoration of our heart, it is when He is taking us apart to make us perfect through suffering. Therefore it is that God sends sorrow to one man, and not to another ; at one time in this way, at another time in that. The sorrow that might cure us to-day might not cure us to-morrow, the sorrow that might be good for me might not be good for you. Each man has his own sorrows, different from any one else's in all the world, since he himself is different from any one else. Each individual believer is led his own way into the wilderness ; each has Jesus with him there.

*Providence and Prayer.*

THE practical result of our belief in Divine Providence is the one thing to inquire about; and whatever our private theory may be, it need not give us uneasiness, and it cannot seriously mislead us, if only it encourages us in prayer. As has well been said, man is a creature that prays; and whatever may be the speculative difficulties of prayer, however hard some of us may find it to reconcile the notion of prayer moving God with God's infinite and unerring wisdom, in spite of all the philosophers and the thinkers, men and women will go on praying as they have ever done; and, what is more, will refuse to be convinced that their prayers are in vain. In plain truth, all the difficulties on the subject (and there are difficulties) simply and solely spring (as Bishop Butler has observed about revealed religion generally) from our imperfect knowledge of God. A man will say, "Do you really expect an answer to your prayer? For if you do, you are only in

other words asking for a miracle." "Well, what if I am? Can you tell me, my friend, what a miracle is, what nature is, what God's order is, what interrupts and what does not interrupt it, what is contrary to it, and what is merely above it, or suspends it?"

*Does God Answer Prayer?*

I CAN faintly conceive an almighty God; but I cannot conceive a God who is not almighty. If He is almighty, and this wonderful universe with its hundreds of millions of worlds is the expression of the thought of His will—for one of us insignificant creatures, a mere atom of dust, to lift up a shrill voice to Him, and say, "Thou canst not do this or that," is to some minds a far less serious dilemma, than to confess God, and yet to make Him abdicate His omnipotence. "What saith the Scripture?" From first to last, it not only sanctions but commands prayer. And *our Saviour* prayed. Thereby He bequeathed us an example, which He

further impressed and emphasised by very distinct and solemn words. Oh, I think the heart grows hot, with a not unshameful heat, when it ponders His words about prayer, and is invited to ponder them in the light of this dilemma—either He did not know what He was saying, or, knowing it, He said it because it was a useful deceit! His prayer before the choosing of the Twelve—His prayer before the raising of Lazarus—His prayer about the repentance of Peter—His prayer about the passing of the bitter cup—these were as real, and human, and direct prayers as any lips of man have breathed: and to say that they were but an acted drama is almost more of a folly than a blasphemy. But in His directions to His Apostles, did not He bid them ask, and seek, and knock? Did not He tell them that whatsoever they should ask the Father in His name, He would give it? Did not He bid them, as the final agony of their people came on, to pray that their flight might not be in the winter? Did not He promise them that where two of them should

agree concerning anything that they should ask, their Father in Heaven would do it for them?

*Prayer for Temporal Blessings.*

THERE are some things we ought to ask of God ; some we may ; some we can if we please, but we had better not ; about some let us be absolutely silent. If they are to come, they will come ; but let us have no share in their coming. . . . When the Saviour taught His Disciples to say, "Give us this day our daily bread," He plainly and deliberately justified the principle of such a prayer, while He limited it ; and by an illustration borrowed from the natural compassionateness of a father, He yet further encouraged its use. When we ask God for bread, and in this complicated system of things bread for many of us means a great deal, we ask Him for what we want, because He has so made us that we cannot do without it ; also because He has made Himself responsible for it, by bringing us here, without any act or choice

of ours. He will not give us a stone, or He would be worse than one of His own creatures, but it shall be bread: though not bread rained from Heaven, but coming to us through our own exertions, for which the opportunities occur through Him. Surely it is an insincere and mawkish spirituality that conceives prayer to be marred or stained by these temporal elements, if suitable after their kind; and while it wrongs God by its ignorance of His fatherly justice, it robs man of his rightful access to the Throne of Grace in every time of need.

*The Possibilities of Prayer.*

WHO shall limit the power, the usefulness, or the final results of fervent and believing prayer? The little child can pray, and its heavenly Father will not despise its innocent, lisping words. The bedridden patient can pray, and from the four corners of a sick-room can set constantly in motion the invisible forces which strengthen the distant missionary with a

power which he feels but cannot trace ; which blesses the physician's skill to a struggling life and snatches it from the jaws of dissolution ; which brings quick and deep repentance to some prodigal son, far from his father's house, but not far from a parent's prayers ; which gives courage and purpose to some brave reformer struggling against evil and beaten to his knees by almost fatal blows. Moment by moment the prayers of the saints rise up like incense before the throne of God, made acceptable and potent through the name of the one Mediator. Moment by moment they return to us in showers of blessing.

*Prayer the Measure of Holiness.*

THE measure of our sanctity, the fruitfulness of our labours, the influence of our example, the serenity of our temper, the manhood of our entire nature, and the joy of our daily service will all depend on prayer. Christ could not dispense with prayer, and the more filled His life

was with duty the fuller was it of prayer.

*God Ever Faithful.*

IF it is possible in the Twenty-third Psalm to trace the outlines of David's history, it is equally possible in the third verse to guess the workings of his mind. He had been exulting in his assurance of the Good Shepherd's love. His lips were yet trembling with that exquisite chant of praise for pastures green and waters still, when suddenly, it may be, the thought flashed across him—"Has it been always so?" and while memory recalled the interruption of mercy, conscience betrayed the cause. "Were the pastures green and the waters still when Bathsheba's child died; or when Absalom drove me from my home and my kingdom, and I went up to Olivet barefoot, weeping as I went up? when confusion covered my face, and reproach broke my own heart; and the rough road by which He brought me back was His way of bringing me out of my sin? It was



to restore my soul, and to lead me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

*Patience with God's Delay.*

WE have to learn patience with the delays of God : whether in fulfilling our desires, or bestowing the comfort of His presence, or healing sickness, or overcoming sin. God can wait, wrote a great Father, for He is eternal. We, on the contrary, so far as our earthly life is concerned, are the creatures of a moment, and feel we cannot wait. "In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up ; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth." We greatly wish for something, and the swift years pass on until the time for enjoying it is past, and the old eagerness is forgotten. It comes, at last, but grey hairs have come with it. The delay has had its meaning, which we shall see hereafter ; but the hope deferred has made the heart sick. Then there are moments when to feel His presence, and to hear His voice, and taste

His love, and anticipate His glory, would more than recompense us for bitter pain, or the tossings of long night watches. Yet He does not come, nor send, nor speak, nor even look at us ; though we have gone to Him and told Him how we trust Him and lie humbly at His feet. . . .

Sickness comes, and to some of us it is no new thing, we have been fighting with it all our lives. We humbly and earnestly ask that we may recover, for life is beautiful, duty is noble, opportunities are few, and we think of the time we have lost. But the Lord seems to have gone to the other side of Jordan ; and Jairus, while his little daughter is at the very point of death, stands by, in an agony of impatience, compelled to spare the Lord for an afflicted woman, who might well have waited till the morrow. We need patience for the disappointments of life ; not least those disappointments of which we have no need to be ashamed when they affect the discharge of our duty, and which seem even to punish us for doing it.

*God's Purpose in us.*

FOR every man the blessed will of God has ordained a life-plan which he is to accomplish, a work which he is to do in accomplishing it, a time which will be given him for doing it. Every life-plan, and life-work, and life-period is absolutely distinct from every other. Time, as it proceeds, will make each of them plain. Wait for them to be made plain, and be ready and obedient for the summons. "I must work the work of Him that sent me, while it is day." What light is to bodily action, opportunity is to dutiful will. The light departs and returns not until the morning, the opportunity once gone is as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" I must use those hours. "The night cometh."

*God's Instruments.*

THE good man is not he who has no faults, but he who is honestly striving to

conquer them. The wise man is not one who never errs, but he who, having erred, finds it out, acknowledges it, and tries not to err again. A just God does not *expect* perfect characters for fulfilling His purposes—in that case He would have to go out of the world to find them—neither does He *make* perfect characters on this side of Heaven, for then the present order of the world must be utterly changed. What He does is this. He chooses the fittest instruments He can find for His various purposes, and when He has found them, He calls them, trains them, makes the best of them, and bears with them till they are done with.

*The Struggle with the Old Adam.*

THE only way of subduing the old nature is by cultivating the new ; and if we would not do the works of the flesh, we must bring forth the fruits of the spirit. The Divine Voice whispers not only “Thou shalt not,” but “Thou shalt.” The way to conquer selfishness is to do little con-

stant, delicate, secret acts of self-denying love; and to subdue pride, we must wash our brothers' feet, and seek the lowest room, in honour preferring one another, and never laying traps for praise. If we are covetous, let us regularly and resolutely lay aside a definite portion of our income for judicious and well-proportioned distribution as "every man hath need." If we are tempted to resentment or irritability, let us cultivate gentleness and a manful forbearance. If we are apt to be self-indulgent, let us, without making life intolerable and so provoking a swift reaction, often deny ourselves in little things. If we are unsociable and self-sufficing, let us go into society, and give all our sympathies to those who need them. In this way, most surely, solidly, rapidly, the divine life is built up within us, and we become increasingly partakers of the divine nature. In this way, too, we form the habit of goodness, which becomes easier, sweeter, more self-recompensing, more natural, year by year. In this way, further, we cultivate the friendship of our Lord, and He can

come to visit us, sure of a welcome, sure of abundant heart-room, sure of being listened to, even in His faintest whispers, sure of being obeyed, when He would guide us with a look of His eye.

*Science, Music, Art.*

SURELY it is a morose religionism that fears knowledge, or distrusts science, or condemns music, or despises art. All these things have been, are, ought to be, and will be used, and perhaps increasingly, as handmaids of the Church's ministry, and for the innocent delight of the intelligent. Only, they do not make Heaven, or reveal God. We are bound, according to our opportunities, to make the best of ourselves, and to be complete. To suppose that faculties have been given us, which we are not meant to employ, or tastes which it is unsuitable to cultivate, is to accuse our Maker of injustice and folly.

## Getting and Spending.

### *Money and its Tests.*

NOTHING tries a man more than the sudden loss or gain of money.

A noble nature is noble with money.

Perhaps there is hardly any sin to which religious people are more prone than covetousness.

The secret of being well off is to know how to do without things.

It is almost always those who have least money who indulge themselves most, and those who have most money who indulge themselves least.

Wasteful people are often stingy ; for this is their only way of recouping themselves for their improvidence ; but stingy people are often wasteful, just because they are stingy. A stitch in time saves nine.

As a rule, it is sometimes much better, where there is a claim of blood or friendship on you, to give half rather than lend all.

*The Right and Wrong of Speculation.*

IN trying to think out the abstract lawfulness of speculation, the first thing to make clear is what speculation means ; for there are two very different things expressed by the same word. If we simply mean by it the bold and prompt seizing of an opportunity, through the clear foresight that guesses the turn of the market, or the practised skill that calculates how the events of the day will affect exchange, then it is but the legitimate exercise of a special and valuable kind of talent. The welfare of society is often greatly prompted by the happy ventures of commercial enterprise ; and to forbid such efforts would be but a feeble and silly attempt to paralyse the energy and to impede the progress of mankind. But where speculation is a mere gambling throw in the dark, the rash impulse of a lazy and ignorant hardihood to make in a week what honest work could barely make in a year ; imperilling precious interests on the chance of a die, and fostering in the character just those instincts and



tendencies that make industry intolerable, and tempt men to exchange the serious business of life for the risks of a lottery, the individual speculator not only injures himself, but he defrauds the community. He injures himself, for he can never enjoy that real sweetness of success with which honest labour sooner or later rewards us ; he defrauds the community, since it does not receive from him that contribution of diligent and useful production which is wanted to augment the general capital of the State.

*Wealth a Stewardship.*

A CHRISTIAN'S hourly conviction about all his spending should be that he is a steward for God, both as regards himself and his neighbour. Among the rough tests of the genuineness of our religion, none is so sure as our habit of giving away. . . . A conscientious man should, as a matter of course, set aside a certain part of his income as belonging to God, and sacredly to be dedicated to Him. The

principle, however, once recognised, the special application of it must vary according to the individual case. . . . To the man who fears God and values his own consistency, and understands something of human nature, and steadily looks on into the other world, the question, sooner or later, will and must occur, "Is not the time come that I have enough ; and shall not I better please God and help my own salvation by retiring from the anxieties of my career ? " Or, if such may not be, and it does sometimes happen that the entire relinquishment of active employment has a serious if not fatal result, a good man may easily resolve with himself that the occupation he will continue for his health's sake, but henceforward the profit of it shall be for God.

### *Dress and Adornment.*

WHEN God gives any one personal attractions, He entrusts them with a means of influence which He expects to be made use of ; and there are two kinds of vanity,

that which affects to despise natural gifts, and that which assumes a personal pre-eminence from them. But be there beauty or no, it is still reasonable and natural to wish to make the best of ourselves. For we should dress, not only for own fancy, but to please those we live with. A true wife likes to please her husband's eye ; and a father is gratified by seeing his daughters dress as suits him. But clothes cost money ; and while extremes on both sides should be carefully avoided, quite the most wasteful plan is to give it no thought at all. " Can a maid forget her ornaments ? " is an inspired question, which has its root in the intrinsic reasonableness of some kind of care being given to them ; and the elevated temperament that treats clothes and their cognate subjects with a lofty negligence is certain to be extravagant and likely to be shabby.

*Innocent Indulgence.*

WHEN people ask if it can be consistent with simplicity and self-denial to buy a

picture, or to own a carriage, or to take a tour, when all these things spend money that might be directly used for the glory of our Master, let us not fear to say, *it is*, if nothing else comes so near us as to make the indulgence unlawful. For two reasons. First, because one end of money is enjoyment; and God gives it us, among other purposes, to minister to this enjoyment; and He rejoices over our joy in His gifts, as a tender human parent is glad in his child's gladness at some present of his own. Oh, we do our Heavenly Father wrong, if we suppose that No is the word He likes best to say to us. His is no austere nature that can neither smile nor bless; and if out of our superfluity we would sometimes buy something that to possess would please us, let us ask His leave and be free.

Another reason is, that society, in all the immense varieties of its complex life, exists and grows by the mutual interdependence of its members; that He who has implanted in us the love of art, or of music, or of books, or of nature, or of travel, must

intend and sanction the moderate indulgence of them ; that the Christian, so far from needing to feel himself debarred these innocent recreations, should feel himself as free as other men for them ; for is it not a Father's world in which we find ourselves, and are not these mercifully given us for happiness ?

*Excessive Expenditure.*

THERE can be no kind of doubt that excessive expenditure of living is one of the great vices of the time ; and it would be well for all of us if the power of the pulpit were more frequently and vigorously exercised in sternly discountenancing the selfish thoughtlessness that buys what it cannot pay for, and in stigmatising a deliberate and persevering extravagance by its proper name of fraud.

*Sordid Cares.*

To be always worrying about small expenses, or regretting past losses, or

talking about prices, or even comparing too closely and anxiously one year's accounts with another's, will secretly, but inevitably, mildew the spirit with a kind of sordid earthliness. To give away will become harder, for we shall soon fancy we cannot afford it ; and what at first was but a just carefulness about daily spending, if not watched against, will presently change even a liberal man into a miser. Then your punishment will come in the shape God sees you to need, and in the shape you will most dread. Either the wealth itself will be taken from you, and the idol of gold will be shattered before your eyes ; or some child or heir for whom you were destroying your very soul is taken from you, to the incorruptible treasure of the better country ; and so the Psalmist's sentence comes home to you as with the thrust of a sword point—" He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them."

*Frugal Content.*

To have just enough, and to know that it is enough, and to be thankful for it—this is the secret which the Gospel long ago proclaimed to mankind, but which the wisdom of the world rejects with scorn. Yet to suppose that a modest competence, such as modern times would call utter poverty, has no real charm or vivid enjoyment of its own, is a profound mistake. It is full of joy, though of the simplest and purest kind. Let some of us middle-aged people who, after twenty or thirty years' hard work, have a little more to live upon than when we first started (though, indeed, we have very much more to do with it), look back to the days long ago, when, in a tiny house, and with simple furniture, and the whole world in front of us, domestic love sweetened every care of life. Are we so much happier now, when every half-crown does not want such sharp looking after, than when we had seriously to consider if we could afford a week's holiday, or invite the visit of a friend? How rich, too, we

thought ourselves then if we had once in three months a five-pound note to spare and spend ! How we talked over this way and that of doing the best with it, and at last picked up something to make the little drawing-room brighter, or perhaps bought some second-hand books for the study shelves. The enjoyment was so keen because the pleasure was so rare.

*The Christian Attitude.*

IF money comes, let it come. He who sends it surely does not mean it to hurt us. We need not fear it with a feeble terror, though no one sin has ruined so many souls as covetousness. And if money goes, let it go : only let us see that it does not go through folly or sin of ours.

*The Nemesis of Sinful Success.*

IF it happens, as certainly it did happen with Jacob, that success, if not exactly owing to our sins, is so much connected with them that to common observers it



looks to be, is God the minister of sin? God forbid! What then does He do to prevent our saying so? Does He change the purpose, or does He punish the sin? He punishes; He does not change. He will not take back the birthright from Jacob. It has been sold to him, it was his, and it was meant to be. He does not bid David send Bathsheba back to a widowed home. She had been made his wife, apparently more by his fault than her own; and that she should remain that she might be the progenitor of the Christ. Jacob was to be Israel, and Solomon was to be Bathsheba's child. But, mark this, both Jacob and David take their terrible scourging to the grave. From David's house the sword never departed till he died. As for Jacob, again and again did the sins by which he had thought to bless himself, meet him and lacerate him in the sins of his children. He, who had deceived others, was himself deceived. He, who had defrauded others, was himself defrauded. What he did to Isaac, in like fashion Judah did to him, and the com-

ment on his chequered history is best found in his own account of it to Pharaoh. "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers."

## Love and Marriage.

### *Early Engagements.*

ARISTOTLE'S notion that the right time for a man to marry is thirty-seven, apart from the simply physical consideration that suggested the reflection, would practically mean an irreparable loss of many years of happiness to mankind, as well as of that steadying, and purifying, and elevating influence which is at once the sign, the result, and the blessedness of all pure human passion. For a man, in Arthur's noble words—

"Indeed I know  
Of no more subtle master under heaven,  
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,  
Not only to keep down the base in man,  
But teach high thought, and amiable words,

And courtliness, and the desire of fame,  
And love of truth, and all that makes a man."

For a woman it stirs and enlarges and ripens the whole nature; and is at once her true career, and her unspoken delight, and her tender secret, and her best safeguard, and her highest dignity. So essential is it to her as part of her experience, that never to have been in love seems to many so strange a barrenness of spirit that they must needs fancy they have; or that this failing them they will give their heart's worship to some ideal hero. So good and wholesome is it for them, that even if it comes to nought, with circumstances of apparent fickleness or unavoidable mortification, ask her if she would have preferred that nothing of it should have happened, and the chances are she will be glad not to have missed it, notwithstanding its pain and sadness, so much it taught her then, so much it shows her now.

*Long Engagements.*

IF early attachments are sometimes unavoidable and occasionally desirable, early engagements are usually embarrassing, and just as often selfish. There is almost a culpable inconsiderateness in the impatience of a man to tie a woman's affections to him at a hopeless distance from the opportunity of claiming them. A woman, while she may be quite sure that her sweetheart will wait for her, if he thinks her worth waiting for, will perhaps best consult her own dignity, will certainly be considering the comfort of her relations, if for a reasonable interval she prefer to keep herself free.

*Mistaken Engagements.*

No weakness is so great as that which, at the cost of a sharp but short pain—nay, even the possible charge of a dishonourable fickleness—refuses to prevent a life-long sorrow. While it is better not to make vows at all than to have to break

them when made, of all false vows none are so false as those which promise to love and cherish when loving and cherishing have been discovered to be impossible. If you must break your covenant, break it with one quick act and have done with it, permission first asked, or, if necessary, compensation frankly made. Surely anything is better than to compel two human beings, who in a little interval might, perhaps, have found their consolation elsewhere, to go on breaking their vows every day of their lives, because one, or it may be both of them, had not moral courage enough to confess an error of judgment, which, though it may deserve censure and compel regret, is sometimes quite compatible with manliness and honour.

*Conditions of a Happy Marriage.*

WE can hardly help agreeing as to the conditions of a felicitous marriage. One is, that *the fancy be seized*; that you marry, not only because prudence assents, but

because the heart likes ; and remember, fancy does not in the least insist on what is called physical beauty. You make your beauty for yourself by seeing it and admiring it with your own sense of the beautiful ; and if others don't agree with you, so much the better for you ; there will be fewer rivals. Yet, it is almost everything that you not only fancy, but *respect*. In fact, true love, perhaps without knowing it, begins with respect. Where there is no respect, it is not love at all, but a physical instinct. Nevertheless, the respect must speedily warm into love, for too much veneration treats one like a grandfather. Then there should be *social equality*, *intellectual sympathy*, and *sufficient means*.

### *Honeymoons.*

As to long honeymoons, most sensible people have come utterly to disbelieve in them. They are a forced homage to utterly false ideas ; they are a waste of money at a moment when every shilling is wanted for much more pressing objects ;

they are a loss of time which soon comes to be dreary and weary in a grand hotel or dull lodgings, with nothing to see and less to do. Most of all, they are a risk for love, which ought not so soon to be so unpleasantly tested by the inevitable petulances of a secret *ennui*. Six days, by all means, and then, oh! happy friends, go straight home, with your money in your pocket for the real honeymoon.

*The First Year.*

THE first year in the new home—ah, there is no year like it; for though others may be happier, the early freshness is gone. Home, I say; for young married people should always, if possible, have a home of their own in preference to lodgings. Every divinity should have a temple, and spousal love as much as any. Otherwise the first associations of the life will be bald and mean, and unworthy; the husband will have no house to rule, and the wife no household to manage, and there will be a

tendency for shoes to get down at the heels, and things generally to be in a crumpled and loose condition. No matter how tiny the house is ; that it is the first, makes it a palace. No matter if you are a little cramped in money matters, if there is reason to expect you won't be always cramped. It is an immense gain to be compelled to economise ; for rich as we may become afterwards, habits of wholesome thrift never quite leave us. The furniture may be scanty, and some of it old ; but a clean chintz makes common things pretty, and the dullest of rooms is set off by some of the bright knick-knacks that came in so plentifully among the bridal spoils. Besides, if you start with everything you want, there is nothing to wish for, and no pleasure in adding to your possessions.

*The Best Dowry.*

ALMOST the one thing an active man wants most from his wife is an intelligent and entire sympathy with his professional



employment. For the happiness of life consists far more in its interests than in its possessions ; and who can care for a wax doll at the other end of the table, whose only object in life is to put on clothes, and then put them off? He wants another double to himself, who can enter into his pursuits, share his disappointments, divide his burdens, and exult in his success. And coupled with sympathy should be encouragement. For if a man's own wife does not believe in him, and look up to him, and admire him, and like him better than any one else, poor man, who else will? If he is not king at home, where is he king? Nevertheless, her encouragement must be delicate, and judicious, and perfectly sincere and discriminating, and in rather sparse measure. Praise is always sweet, from no lips so sweet as a wife's. But unless a man has turned into a bluebottle fly that can't get honey enough, he won't care for it unless it is perfectly natural ; he will be vexed by it if it is overdone. In fact, he will only feel ridiculous if she praises him publicly for

the very thing which his friends and relations happen to be aware he has never possessed; and though he likes her to admire his speeches, if she likes all alike, or picks out the inferior passages for special remark—it is flat.

*Courtesy at Home.*

WHILE no one has a stronger right to claim good manners than a wife, she is sometimes the last person to receive them; and occasionally the husband is a gentleman anywhere but in his own home.

*Unwise Devotedness.*

WIVES should never be squaws. For, with all their kindly meaning and absorbed devotion, they only earn the wretched success of gradually turning the husbands they wait on at one moment into a fretful baby, at another into a savage bear. A strong man, petted and humoured about trifling bodily ailments as if they were malignant diseases, or praised to his face

for having borne a trifling fatigue with a patient endurance that would not have been out of place in a ride across the Pampas, or made prominent and intrusive in the matter of his least personal wishes to the exclusion of every one else in the house—the hosts included—in the end becomes apt to bite hard at the hand that has lost its early whiteness in fastening his boots and packing his luggage; when he does not bite, growls.

*The Spiritual in Marriage.*

FEW married persons who believe in God and a future life, and understand ever so little of what they are and ought to be to each other, will omit at least once a day kneeling side by side before God. How can they who never pray alone together feel in any real sense of the words that Christ is the true link between them? or cherish with ever so small, ever so dull a hope the expectation of meeting again in the joy of God? There is yet one other kind of help which the wife can

give her husband, as well as the husband the wife, in earnest, regular, definite intercession. To notice what may seem but trifles—how often married people must see in each other, not without anxiety, and a personal responsibility about it, some fault hardening, some good habit growing weaker, haste to be rich gradually deteriorating the moral sense, tendencies to error, or inconsistency stealing over the spirit like a malarious dew ; quick words apt to be said that had much better not be said ; small acts of injustice or unkindness to children, to servants, to friends, which to have noticed at the moment would have been a supreme indiscretion, which ought to be noticed, that they may not occur again. What better way than to take them and pour them out before God, who knows and loves better than we know and love, who hates the sin far more than we can do, and who is not only on our side about it, but has Himself put into our heart to be on His side ? We take it and leave it ; our hearts are at rest through having done it ; we know He will make us

an opportunity and find us the word to say in good season, and with fitting discretion, if He so desires it.

*Improvident Marriages.*

IF two young people like to marry upon nothing, and are pleased to call it faith or devotedness—being of age, they can do so ; but then they should be prepared for the consequences. Most certainly they have no right to expect that the embarrassments which, with their eyes made wide open, they may feel certain to come on them, should fall on any but themselves. Wise people think it better to wait, and their prudent self-denial usually has its reward. If they don't like to wait, nobody can make them ; but they must face their risk, and balance their gains. This is certain, that they ought to have a great deal more than most people have of the power of constant self-denial, and petty economy, and resolute independence, or their strong and early love may be taxed and tried to the uttermost by a grate half

empty, by scanty meals, by children thinly clothed, badly fed, and wretchedly schooled, and by a continual atmosphere of mortifying indebtedness. This is probable, that very early marriages, with very slender resources, stripped of the hollow jargon of romance, may be nothing less than the unjustifiable self-indulgence of two young persons, indifferent to every other consideration but that of pleasing themselves.

### *Unhappy Marriages.*

MARRIAGE, in some cases, let us frankly confess it, proves a cruel mistake. The wrong persons are matched ; the flaw is a flaw that runs through the entire nature ; no amount of outside courtesy, or conventional homage, or forced endurance, or stubborn hopefulness, can make the needle point anywhere than to the north, or can thaw the ice in the Arctic Sea. It may be physical repugnance or absolute incongruity of temper, or one of the two hearts secretly given to another ; but there is no bridging over the wide gulf between them,

and the crevasse widens with time. How bad for the children, how sad for the relatives, how unutterably wretched for them, no word can say! What is to be done? It is to be bravely, patiently, and meekly endured as the mysterious will of God. It is a strong thing to say that their marrying was His will. We have not the facts before us to justify that assertion. But now that by matrimony they are one, it must be His will that they should abide in it "until death us do part." These are the solemn words of both of them, and they are written on high and for ever. If there is love on one side, who shall say that in the course of years it shall not win the other—that patience shall never have its blessed reward, and a generous manfulness not see itself crowned with the honest confession of a long-alienated but now surrendered affection? At any rate, if marriage, instead of being a joy, is but a life-long affliction — instead of being the knitting and solacing of two human hearts, is but a discipline for one, and a sort of maddening misery for the other—this, too,

has its place in the dispensation of a Divine Providence — this, too, is among the “all things” which work together for good to them that love God.

*Beloved Spinsterhood.*

As for unmarried women, what a dreary wilderness this earth would be without them! In thousands of homes the maiden sister or aunt is the very angel of the family, the children’s idol, the secret wonder and delight even of those who too unscrupulously use her; by sick-beds and death-beds a divine consoler; the depository of the tender secrets of blushing hearts; the unwearied friend of the old, and the poor, and the lonely. Old maids, indeed! With certain obvious exceptions, they are the very salt of the earth, the calm and clear light of the household that is so blessed as to own them; their distinction, to be wanted by everybody; their reward, to be useful to everybody; their home — the snuggest, warmest place in the hearts that can love.



And if they have a niche to fill on earth, as none can fill like them, many of them shall have a crown of surpassing brightness in Heaven.

*As the Years go by.*

As years multiply, changes come with the years, some for good, some for evil. If there are children, there will be some trial, but probably more blessing. For was not the Psalmist right when he said, "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them"? Is not God's righteousness pledged to fill the mouths that He sends? Are not the fullest homes usually the happiest, just because a perpetual war is waged there against isolation and selfishness? A childless home misses its discipline and loses its music, but it is often a rich treasury of wide and human sympathies; and there are few things more touching or more beautiful than husband and wife slowly travelling down the hill of life together, everything to each other that loving hearts can be.

## Children.

*The Flower of the World.*

CHILDREN are the salvation of the race. They purify, they elevate, they stir, they instruct, they console, they reconcile, they gladden us. They are the ozone of human life, inspiring us with hope, rousing us to wholesome sacrifice. If, in the faults which they inherit, they show us the worst of ourselves, and so move us to a salutary repentance, they also stimulate our finer qualities ; they cheat us of weary care ; they preach to us, not so much by their lips as by their innocence ; their questions set us thinking, and to better purpose than the syllogisms of philosophers ; their helplessness makes us tender ; their loveliness surprises us into a pure joy. To me, at least if I may say so much, a child, wherever I see it, and no matter whose it may be, is a thing of unspeakable delight. Again and again the mere sight of a child, whether at play, or rambling on the road,

or gathering flowers, or fast asleep, gives me a feeling of happiness. A child is a sunbeam on a winter sea, a flower in a prison garden, the music of bells over the noise of a great city, a fragrant odour in a sick-room.

*Their Need of Sympathy.*

WITH their affectionateness, which shows itself in countless ways of tact, and silence, and presence of mind, as the years grow and the perception of things widens, there is almost always combined a good deal of sensitiveness which, if it is occasionally the better for a somewhat bracing treatment, needs attention and some sympathy. Their caresses, of which some, indeed, are not over prodigal, should not be repulsed as troublesome, or derided as worthless. The young are soon chilled, and chills harden. Their proposals to assist you in the affairs of life, while sometimes embarrassing, often clumsy, and perhaps more often suggested for want of something to do need not be hustled away as a house-

maid's broom sweeps out cobwebs. Their little presents, often, just from want of thought, not quite as useful as they might be, should be made much of and put away with care.

*Their Spiritual Troubles.*

SOME children, even within their first seven years, have their doubts and difficulties about religion. To leave them quite alone, to make much account of them, to make little account of them—each is a possible way, and each way has its perils. There is nothing like a concrete instance of an abstract difficulty. The case of a child is known to me, of a thoughtful and sensitive temperament, who, long before what we understand by girlhood, had frequent periods of doubt, both as to God's personal existence and His love to her. She confided them to her father, her only parent. Wisely or unwisely, he felt it inexpedient to argue with her, lest by making too much of her difficulties he might reason them further into her soul.

He was content to suggest a question and to urge a duty. "If any one told you that I did not love you, should you mind it?" The little face smiled. There, at least, she felt on a rock. "Pray to God just the same, whether you feel Him near or distant; equally you need Him, equally He cares for you." That cloud disappeared for the time. Though others will come, they cannot be so dark as that. . . .

Always be perfectly frank with a child's questions. If you cannot answer them all, say so, and explain why. Do not pretend to know when you do not know. Do not give an answer to a child about which you are secretly doubtful, and which you would hesitate to give to a man, or which you would scout if offered to yourself. Never pretend that there is an answer for everything. Never treat doubt as if it were a sin, when it may be only an infirmity; nay, when it may even be the happy symptom of a soul's honest and eager groping after truth.

*Hints on Training.*

BEFORE anything else encourage the practice of regular private prayer, and remember that if forms are crutches, it is better to use crutches than to run the risk of not walking at all. . . . Let Sunday be for itself and like itself, free from Judaic literalness, free also for the service of man, the worship of God, the edification of the personal spirit, the fellowship of the domestic life. Always also aim at making it supremely if quietly happy. Do not encourage introspective moods in children. Do not force the expression of religious experience, while your ear and heart should be ever open to all that your children may have to say. Dread unreality even more than thoughtlessness. Beware, lest through injudicious and premature stimulating of the religious consciousness, a process of artificial mechanics comes to be substituted for the quiet unseen working of the Spirit of God. . . . Nay, it may be both wiser and safer in many cases to leave those, whom we have sacramentally

dedicated to God, and whom we daily commend to His heavenly grace, more than some of us consent to do, to the growth of time, to daily sober instruction out of Holy Scripture, and the secret but mighty working of the Spirit of God. Make Christ felt to be the real, present, living Master, Friend, Saviour of the child's soul, and leave them together. . . .

A child is, within its own sphere of authority, the sternest of despots, and when we reflect that the parent is in the place of God to the child, and that resistance to the only authority it knows is practically rebellion against Him, the duty of parental discipline becomes a religious duty. Firm, consistent, kindly, just government is not only for the child's good, but very much for its happiness ; also let it be joined with serenity, especially in the case of boys. Nothing impresses children more than quiet power ; nothing so utterly demoralises them as a nervous, spasmodic excitableness. . . . There is one exception, however, to be noticed in the treatment of a child's faults, where serenity would be mis-

placed, because it would be undeserved and misunderstood. I mean where a child resists, or insults, or strikes a parent. Instant and summary and painful discipline is the only method to be used.

*The Joy of Childhood.*

ALL young things are full of joy ; and He who made them means them to be so. . . . Joy is to help the young to grow, and to make their start, and to bear their disappointments, and to part with their illusions, and to face their discipline, and to remedy their mistakes. The little bark is on the shore, and it needs but one vigorous shove to push it into the water, and then a steady breeze to fill the sails, and float it out over the bar into the deep sea. And this is what joy does, and nothing else like it. . . . Blessed are the young, says the Christian philosopher. We were all young once, and we all hope to be young again, when we put on our immortality.



*The Suffering of Children.*

I KNOW no greater trial even to the strong faith of a manly Christian, than to see his beloved child writhing and moaning in pain, and yet to say honestly, "The will of the Lord be done." And yet are we not to see, that still in a degree the sin of the race is visited on the children; that the will even of an infant needs submitting to the will of God; that the sinfulness of our nature in all alike must be purged with fire as well as with blood; that patience can only be learned in the school of suffering; and that perfection, in some mysterious way, is inseparable from pain? But if children, and even infants, are to learn obedience through the things that they suffer, it is quite intelligible that those whose lives are professedly devoted to the consolation of their fellows, should in this way be tutored into the tenderness of Christ.

*The Death of Children.*

No one can understand the sorrow of a child's death, who has not actually endured it. When you lose a child, you lose part of yourself. No doubt the age makes a difference. The longer we have loved, the more we lose in the parting, and the promise of opening years gives an additional keenness to the pain. Yet are not infants our darlings as well? There is no reasoning ourselves out of our deep sadness, when we put away the little waxen body in its white coffin, and give the last kiss to the cold marble brow, and wonder at the majesty of death in its face, and comfort ourselves with the thought that it is safe in the Shepherd's arms, and then shut it up, to see it no more till we are dead ourselves. How often we wake, for nights and nights after, as if the sharp wailing cry we knew so well called us to its side! When the first darkness glooms over the little grave, and the rain falls, or the snow, it is hard to sleep; it is as though the rain wetted *it*, or the snow chilled *it*, though well we know

that no harm can reach it in the sinless land where, knowing what we cannot know, seeing what we cannot see, and loving as we cannot love, it sings among the angels of God. When we come across its toys in the nursery, or put away its little clothes (it is best to do these things at once), when, as we walk in the garden, we see the small wheelbarrow, just where the child left it, or the little spade, grasped by tiny hands that will never grasp it again, the loss comes back, the pain comes back; in no distrust of God, in no rebelliousness about the child, but in the genuine emotion of a nature which mourns because it loves, the sad parent, careful that no one sees them, sits down and has a rush of tears.

### *Boys and Girls.*

IF we deal patiently, and tolerantly, and large-heartedly, and do not scarify with too much pungency the eager and almost boyish dogmatism which with so much charming audacity settles all the problems

under the sun, and harmonises the sciences, and expounds the politics, and arranges the affairs of the universe, the silly season passes, and other and rougher hands than ours put long and sharp pins into the bladders of self-conceit which our boys and girls are wont to blow up ; and when they subside, as they usually do, they are grateful to us for not having too much made them absurd in their own eyes, while we have pleasantly smiled in our hearts, with no bitterness in the smile. Youth, with all its disdains, and caprices, and conceits, and gasconadings, is still the leverage of the world, is still the most lovable and beautiful thing in it. . . . Let us try to make friends with them. It is not always possible, but it is unspeakably wise. Let us encourage them to confide in us. Sometimes they will take their confidences to others, and only when strangers have failed, and the irreparable blunder is committed, in their helpless despair they entrust their wrecked fortunes to their parents. Sometimes all our love, and our counsels, and our example, and our patience will

seem to fail, and it is chaos. Our refuge and hope in such a case must be God, who is their Father as well as our Father, who has other ways of guiding and healing, and restoring, and blessing than are open to us. Nothing can take from us the inestimable consolation of casting the burdens of our children's needs, and sins, and infirmities on Him to whom the whole world can come at the same moment, and have a full hearing. Wherever our children may be, whatever they may be, we can always pray for them.

*Our Children are God's.*

THESE children, whom some of us parents love passionately, and enjoy delightfully, and watch anxiously—we long to make them happy, for it seems their right, though with a happiness regulated by self-restraint, both on their side and our own. We long also to see them good, and are humbled to the quick of the heart when we see our own faults peeping out of them; and we must firmly correct them for the imperfec-

tions they have inherited. Yet they are His as well as ours ; in a sense, more His than ours ; twice His, by creation and grace. Shall not we constantly plead with Him His covenant in baptism ? May we not say to Him, “ Hast not Thou adopted them, to keep them Thine, and wilt Thou cast them off ? ” Can we conceive any prayers, amid the great tumult of human needs and wishes and tears and conflicts that ever go up from this travailing earth to the heart of God, more congenial to His fatherly nature, more likely to be victorious with His compassionate heart, more absolutely in sympathy with His redeeming purpose, more honourable to the passion of His Son Christ, than a parent’s prayers for very precious, though sinful, children, that they may be kept safe in their voyage over the waves of this troublesome world, and be at home with Christ for ever ?

*Grown Up.*

FOR parents authoritatively to interfere with either the judgment, or conscience, or

personal affairs of their children in mature life is unjust, unwise, and extremely hazardous. There may, of course, be a difference of opinion as to what is meant by mature life ; but it is usually understood to be that period when the education is finished and the profession chosen, and when before the law, as well as with society, personal independence is a suitable and equitable claim.

It is unjust, because when a man is of age and has both to speak and act for himself, to interpose an authority, necessary and helpful only in the earlier years, is to usurp a jurisdiction which does not exist in equity, and to jeopardise an influence which will be potent only so far as we do not presume on it. It is unwise, because if it does not excite resentment it induces perplexity, and involves a responsibility which may have serious and unlooked-for results. It is extremely hazardous ; for, in the early years of manhood, characters mature, capacities develop, circumstances happen, openings arise of which the well-meaning parent may be supremely

ignorant, but which entirely alter all the circumstances of the case. If counsel is invited the situation is different; even then, before it is given, it may be well to ascertain if all the facts are before us, and if any steps have already been taken, or other counsels secretly invited, to vitiate the candour of the applicant, and to mar the result of the appeal. The safest relations between parents and adult children are those of unbounded tenderness, frank companionship, prudent reserve. "Am I not free?" is the suitable, reasonable, self-respecting position of the child. "Be free, but be prudent and self-restrained in the use of thy freedom," is the judicious parent's rejoinder.

There is also a lesson for the child, which is not always remembered, but which in justice to the parent ought to be remembered, and acted on as an axiom of family life. He must not expect the concurrent advantages of dependence and independence.



*Father and Child.*

ONE channel through which the sense of sin is deepened in us, is sometimes found (as David found it) in the persons of our children, when they are growing up, or even quite grown up; when the barriers and limitations of childhood have been one by one removed, when full opportunity of manifesting what they are is given, and the result too often—as we think, unfortunately—turns out a displeasing reproduction of ourselves. Do they somewhat fret at authority? So perhaps did we. Do they find home dull, duty tedious, the conventions of life insupportable, and their parents' society to have no attractiveness in it? So perhaps was it with some of us. Have they even grievously sinned, and we have reproached sharply, vehemently, and with a sense of injustice? Does not a whisper come, "Do you remember doing yourself exactly the same thing fifty years ago?" Are they infirm of purpose, and have we never been chargeable with inconstancy?

Does it seem ungrateful or undutiful in them that our company is not always pleasant, and that they chiefly come to us when they want us to do something for them? Well, ingratitude of this sort has the seed of heredity in it. We know in our secret hearts that, if our parents could come back from the dead, we should try to love them with more tenderness and minister to them with more vigilance, and dutifully cherish their society, and joyfully anticipate their wishes, more than ever we did when they were here on earth.

Further, these children of ours, who we think owe so much to us, but who do not always see what they owe, still less care to pay it, minister to us without their knowing it a message with which we could not dispense, and a discipline which is to deepen in us, as nothing else can, a sad thirst for holiness. If the duty is still the same for us occasionally to forbid, to restrain, to reprove, let us do it with a moderated displeasure, and with the equipoise of a secret self-reproach. Just because we love them

so much, their faults and shortcomings distress us. But they are God's as well as ours, and in their own time and generation the experience we are suffering will duly and inevitably pass on to them. The recollection of past neglect, never, it may be, adequately mourned over or hated, cannot but bring with it a clouded and dark sky, when outward activities can be no foil to the reproaches of conscience. It is not as the singing of birds when the spring is coming, nor the lowing of the patient oxen taking home the harvest sheaves. We mourn for our children, we are shamed for our God, we are ill at peace with ourselves. The past cannot be lived again. It is too late. Men and women can never be children again. The opportunity is over, and the thought of our loss steeps us in sadness.

## The Valley of the Shadow.

THE Valley of the Shadow of Death is sometimes quite a distinct thing from

death itself. We may pass through it, as Hezekiah passed through it, and contend with all its terrors, and yet live for years afterwards ; though, indeed, the bitterness of death will be for ever passed, and the shock of the conflict broken. It is also possible to die without passing through it at all ; as when men die suddenly, or with so short a transition from time into eternity as never really to have faced what was at hand.

The Valley of the Shadow of Death is a chapter by itself in human experience. Religious men pass through it, as well as irreligious, and often it has nothing whatever to do with that all-absorbing sense of sin and unworthiness, which has an object of its own in the divine purposes, and which no one need wonder to feel, when approaching the Throne of God. It is, perhaps, commoner in middle age than in childhood, which cannot appreciate the full blessedness of life, or than in old age weary with the toil of it ; and is most frequently seen in men who combine a strong vitality with peculiar powers of enjoyment.

## The Mystery of Pain.

PAIN, about which one writer has said that "it is the deepest thing in the world"; and another, that, even more than knowledge, "pain is power"; is sometimes flung at Christians as a fact utterly incompatible with the idea of the goodness of God; often also by Christians, and by believers before Christ, hastily interpreted as the consequence of personal sin. That much of the physical pain which mankind endures is the result of the violation of natural laws, whether inherited or otherwise, is true; and in that sense He who, in His own wisdom, framed those laws, and at once warned and guarded men from disobeying them by painful consequences, may be said to be its ultimate cause. But the death upon the cross, with its unspeakable sorrow, so utterly dissociated from personal sinfulness, and the Incarnate Life on earth, with the disappointments, and rejections, and misunderstandings, and

opposition it stirred, should be enough to teach us how to dissociate sin from suffering.

## The Enigma of Evil.

WE lay on God's love a heavier burden than it can bear when, in consoling men under the awful sorrows of life, we lightly and conventionally attribute them to the act of God, rather than to the malice of Satan. It is an unspeakable mystery, but our Lord, again and again, in language neither of figure nor tradition, has attributed both disease and insanity to the intervention of the Evil One. While it is perfectly accurate to say that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth," it is equally accurate to affirm of all these mighty woes which fill our sad world with anguish, lamentation, and woe: "An enemy," not a Father, "hath done this!"

## The Discipline of Suffering.

### *The Meaning of Chastisement.*

NOTHING so much tests our knowledge of God, or our actual standing-place in His kingdom, as the way in which we interpret chastisement. Those, who are altogether without God in the world, are disposed to look on it as an unkind and unaccountable interference with their happiness; an evidence, indeed, of divine power, but not of divine goodness. They do not hear in it a kind voice saying to them "Return unto the Lord thy God." They do not bow humbly to the rod, which deals its stripes in this life, in the hope that thereby they may be spared in the next. There is suffering, but no healing process afterwards; a sense of uneasiness, but no real sorrow for sin. Who can wonder then that affliction hardens instead of softening them; that, instead of coming out into the light of the reconciled face of God, in the spirit of a penitent child, they

go back, like Pharaoh, into their Egyptian darkness with hearts of stone!

*An Education and Preparation.*

ANOTHER end of chastisement is to educate and prepare us for life. He who knows what is coming on us would help us to meet it. Not only does He offer us blessing, but, what is much more, He would make us capable of receiving it, and enjoying it, and retaining it, though by a process of trial which, at the moment of its coming, may make us stagger through unbelief. So where life is to be busy, or prosperous, or brilliant, or much encumbered with temptation, affliction acts through the memory, like ballast on a vessel, to keep us steady, and sober, and humble; and not unfrequently do we observe in the lives of Christian men an interval, longer or shorter as it may be, of inactivity, or sickness, or sorrow of a marked kind divinely interposed between the two halves of their life.



*The Affliction of the Good.*

SOME of God's people seem always to be in the furnace; and we wonder at it while we mourn for them. There are always two good reasons for it: one, the truth of which is plain enough to them; the other, the blessedness of which is plain enough to the Church. The Christian himself, one day taken out of the fire and the next day put back into it and kept there, if now and then in his distress he asks himself, "What have I done that I endure such affliction?" soon recovers himself, and on his knees pours out his complaint to God. "I need it all, I deserve it all; only show me Thy love that I may be helped to bear it; and give me Thy grace, that in the end it may all redound to Thy glory." The Church stands by and watches, and suffers and prays; and the tried disciple is felt to be bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in his mortal flesh.

*Christ and His Apostle.*

OUR Blessed Master, "though He were a son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." How does St. Paul describe his own life—a life, after that of his Lord, perhaps the very noblest and hardest and most successful life ever yet lived on this earth? "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings." It is an utter, nay, a dishonest, confusion of terms, to say that these things can be in themselves pleasant to us, or otherwise, at the moment we feel them, than grievous and burdensome. Pain, hunger, isolation, misrepresentation, disappointment, mockery? To speak of such things, even when endured for Christ's sake, as green pastures and still waters, is to call evil good and good evil, is to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. There is no evading the meaning of Christ's words, "If any

man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." St. Paul bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus, and those were marks of pain. But does it therefore follow that there was no strength to bear the pain, no blessed consciousness of a divine presence, going with him and giving him rest everywhere? When he fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, was not Jesus with him? When they stoned him at Lystra, was not his soul rejoicing in the thought that tribulation was the way to the kingdom? Therefore, though the wilderness is not a green pasture, though sickness is not health, nor toil rest, nor loneliness a troop of friends, nor a prison cell the liberty and happiness of home, to live may be Christ, anywhere and anyhow. And thus we find the same Apostle at one moment describing the sharpness of his outward sufferings, at the next moment the blessedness of his inward peace. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not

destroyed : always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

*The Blessings of Sickness.*

THE highest result of illness is to reveal God and to endear man. The certain effect of it is to bring both God and man nearer ; and no one will deny that, as clay in the hands of a potter, so does the strongest of the sons of men on a sick-bed feel himself in the grasp of One who is stronger than he. There are many things which we can do, but we have not yet vanquished Death. The strongest and busiest are in a moment snatched away from their friends, and their occupations, to toss and moan on a sick-bed, through an accident, or an epidemic, or the sudden protest of an overwrought frame against unwise exertion ; and then in a helplessness that humbles them, and, it may be, an agony that unnerves them, they open their eyes to see that God is in the world

as well as Mammon, and that the time is short. Illness *may* mean death; and most of us know persons with whom the thought of death is as distant as a fixed star. Others, who have never known an hour's illness in their lives, are liable to be somewhat unfeeling when sickness comes near them, talking about it, as if it was more a fancy than a reality, complaining of it, as if it was a deliberate conspiracy against their own ease. When they have been ill themselves, the granite in their hearts is softened. For all their lives to come, experience makes them gentle with pain. Others, again, are so immersed in earthly cares, that though they think they have no time to prepare for eternity, they quite forget they must find time to die; while to tens of thousands of us, a life continuous and unbroken, even in its honourable duties and its innocent recreations, has the benumbing effect of a protracted frost on the highest part of our nature. When we have no changes, we forget God.

*The Cross in the Sick-room.*

THE sick-room of the invalid is often the one spot in the whole house where the presence of Jesus is most blessedly felt, because His Cross is so meekly borne. These dull, shut up, monotonous lives are often mighty with power, radiant with a softened light, fragrant with the incense of praise, eloquent with testimony to the divine righteousness. "What I do, thou knowest not now" is the Saviour's whisper to the soul, which humbly, secretly, but sometimes almost with agony wants to know the reason of its tribulation. What He gives, all in the house know, and many outside. He gives Himself, He manifests Himself; and through the steady and cheerful consecration of the will laid at His feet, the house is "filled with the odour of the ointment."

*Patience in Weakness.*

IT greatly depends on the nature and length of the illness, and on the character

and circumstances of the sufferer, how far his sick-room becomes a Bethel to him ; and whether with St. Paul, at one time, he can glory in his tribulation, or with St. Paul at another, while he does his best to bear it, still prays that it may be taken away. Norman Macleod, with his characteristic honesty, thus writes about it : " I cannot say that spiritual realities were vividly present to me during my illness ; but I always felt God as a living atmosphere around me." Some diseases have an inevitable tendency, through the action of the body on the nervous system, to irritate the temper, to overcloud the faith, to make the mind hazy, and the will feeble for prayer.

Then it should be remembered that, in illness, the body *must* occupy our attention, to the partial exclusion of the soul. With scrupulous and sensitive consciences, it seems a kind of sin (when at the worst it is only an infirmity) to be thinking so seriously about eating and drinking ; and to be looking forward with undisguised satisfaction to the time when we shall

exchange broth for chicken, and barley-water for sherry. We must make allowances for the body though we need not pamper it. Higher and holier thoughts are indeed our truest and best companions: but they occupy a region to which, under these circumstances, the dead weight of the flesh forbids us for long together to soar.

*Resignation of Spirit.*

SOME are disposed to say that their time of affliction is all lost time, and it bitterly aggravates the chastisement, already severe enough, to feel that they are but cumberers of the ground. When we discover how lightly we valued our former opportunities, we wish for them back; yet wishing does not bring them back; we long, but long in vain, once more to be permitted to give a cup of cold water to one for whom Christ died. Well, it is something to be humbled for past remissness and to discover mercy which we have not valued as it deserved. Yet inaction



need not be uselessness. The land that lies fallow under the winter frost is mellowing for the spring sowing. It is very possible to be useless amid a great deal of fussy and showy activity, and to be seeking the praise of men, not of God. We cannot be useless while we are doing and suffering God's will, whatever it may be found to be. And we can always do that. If we are bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, we are not useless. And we can always do that. If we are increasing in the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, we are not useless. And we can always do that. While we pray we cannot be useless. And we can always do that. God will always find us work to do, a niche to fill, a place to serve, nay, even a soul to save, when it is His will, and not ours, that we desire to do; and if it should please Him that we should sit still for the rest of our lives, doing nothing else but waiting on Him, and waiting for Him, why should we complain? *Here is the patience of the saints.*

*The Temptations of Sickness.*

To be nursed, and watched, and waited on, and humoured in the least thing, lest contradiction should send the pulse up, and counteract the effect of the medicines, is a trial even for the very best men, which they do not quite appreciate till it is past. To have nothing on earth to do perhaps for weeks together but to lie still and to be petted, and to eat and drink, and to avoid the slightest exertion of hand or brain, has a tendency to create idle and desultory habits, which it may be hard to shake off. Some persons, and these not unfrequently among the most refined and highly nurtured, become in a way almost attached to their illness: and not only do not wish to be better, but think their friends unfeeling if they hint that they are. Others again, on higher, yet still mistaken grounds, dread to go back into the duties and temptations of active life; as if the Father who has watched over them in their sickness will not watch over them in their health; as if

the grace of the Lord Jesus could ever be insufficient for those who trust in Him.

*Compensations of Illness.*

WE have been speaking so far of the painfulness of illness, but it would be a great omission if we took no notice of its manifold compensations, how the Father who smites, <sup>v</sup>heals while He smites us, how the pillow is softened and the pain lightened by the love of friends. When we lie awake at night, it does not always happen that vexations distract us. Happy memories of the past sometimes come to keep us company, and bright thoughts of the future make the heart glow. At such times (let us confess that fever has occasionally something to do with it) the brain works with a force, a precision, and a brilliancy, that delight us, the drawback being, that memory fails when morning comes. Then, how the tenderness of friends, who may not see us, but who cannot forget us, cheers the heart. Flowers which perfume the room, fruit which we cannot always

ourselves eat, but like to see others eat, notes of kind inquiry, which, when they are read to us, we put under our pillow, the very cards of strangers which, when we are recovering, we ask to see, and carefully look over, the kindness of servants (and where a man has neither a wife, nor a mother, nor a sister to nurse him, he soon learns to prize the honest affection, which no wages can repay, and no praise exaggerate), the calm kindly intelligence of the physician, whose step we can soon tell among a thousand, whose visit is the event that begins and finishes the day, who coming, it may be, a stranger, ends with being a friend ; all these are among the tender mercies of our God. Nor is this all, for if only we can trust Him He will not desert us when we most need Him, though sometimes with some of us He hides His face for a little moment to give us presently the joy of the "clear shining after the rain." Let us clearly understand, that in illness our divine and human Lord deals with us, just as we deal with each other. His sympathy is as wise as it is

tender. Though we have no reason to suppose that He was ever actually ill as we are (the perfection of the two natures in the Word Incarnate making it impossible for Him to suffer this consequence of original sin), He did taste pain, He was weary, faint, thirsty, and He died.

Thus, He does not speak to us, if we have not strength enough to listen to Him; He does not expect us to speak to Him, when the mind wanders, and the brain reels. He trusts us, for the Good Shepherd knows His sheep. We trust Him, for He is our living, and our loving, and our unchanging Lord. A dying soldier, near the Seven Dials, once said to the writer, when he asked him what he did when too weak to pray, "Sir, when I am too weak to cling to Him, I ask Him to cling to me." We fall back in the everlasting arms, weary but happy, and some of us can testify, that in moments of extreme weakness the Lord Jesus comes so near, hangs so close over us, that His blessed face all but seems to touch ours, and we feel the whisper of His voice.

*The Service of Ill Health.*

So long as we can serve God by activity, let us do so. When the time comes for manifesting Him in weakness and pain by the life of cheerful, dutiful, uncomplaining sonship, let us do so. It will be easier to do it, if in some measure we can look back on a not quite useless or unfruitful past. Patience is harder than activity ; to sit still less easy than to move about. Yet the sick-room is often more potent in its testimony to the faithfulness of God than a pulpit that sounds forth in sonorous eloquence the message of the Gospel. How to use life, we think we all understand. How to face death calmly and meekly can be learned only in one way.

*The Illumination of Sorrow.*

SORROW has the unique faculty of illuminating and purifying, and weaning and elevating the soul. It opens for a man a window into his spirit, and enables him to see, what otherwise he never could have

seen, some of the deeper secrets of his inmost life. They are not pleasant to see, and sometimes it is real anguish to see them; but they must be seen, and the seeing comes through the pain. This was Job's experience. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee: therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

*The Weaning of Sorrow.*

SORROW weans us, for we see how little to be trusted, whether for permanency or life, are the things on which once we set our hearts, and for which we were content to risk everything. In the moment when we discover how little the whole world is worth, our hearts go up to God and rest on Him. For sorrow, rightly interpreted, elevates us, and lifts us up to Him for whose presence it is preparing us, and whose love we are beginning to understand. "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with Thee?" is the

soul's address to God, first learnt and understood when He has been made its refuge. There is also the thought of His purpose, in which His consolations come to be so blessed and so real. His purpose is twofold. To reveal Himself, and to enable us thereby to reveal Him to others. We should never know the beautifulness, the tenderness, the unspeakable kindness of God but through the discipline of sorrow, even when continuous and interrupting all active duty—sorrow that hinders devotion, and sorrow that benumbs the soul. . . . Even into the mystery of the Incarnate Life came the discipline of sorrow as if no real human soul could reach its best without it. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience through the things which He suffered."

*The Sorrows of the Just.*

THE life-long sorrows of some of God's saints need from them no explanations, no defence. They are not the persons to wonder at it, or to murmur about it, nor



do you ever hear them querulously complaining of their uselessness, though their years are passed in the four corners of a room. It is often the patient sufferers who are the most potent instruments for God.

*The Evidence of God in Sorrow.*

LET us steadfastly believe that God is never hard ; never afflicts *willingly*, or grieves the children of men ; never deals with us *after our sins*, or rewards us *according to our iniquities*. Does not our own experience tell us this ? Heavy as may be our trials, do not we secretly feel we want them all, and that less would not do ? Our sorrow is not to atone for sin, only to help to deliver us from its power : yet it must be sufficient to effect this ; and therefore, to touch the edge of the wound instead of probing it, would be but to trifle with our disease, and prolong our pain.

For, once more, " God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye

may be able to bear it." When there is *sorrow upon sorrow*, there is *strength to strength*; and those who know most about affliction, will be the readiest to confess what lessons it has taught them of the tenderness and faithfulness of God. He knows exactly how far it is safe to go with us; and He watches over us in the furnace, waiting for the moment when He may bring us out. Our powers are never really overtasked, for "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." Our patience need never be exhausted, if we remember in whose hand our times are. Our resources are never dried up, for the fulness of God is at our disposal. Our faith cannot fail while we look up to Christ. "My grace is sufficient for thee": this is a promise for us, as well as for the Apostle. And if we ask, as many ask with Job every day, "What is my strength, that I should hope? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my life?" let us lay hold of the blessed assurance, not only to Israel after the flesh, but to Israel after the spirit: "I will not contend

for ever, neither will I be always wroth :  
lest the spirit should fail before me, and  
the souls which I have made."

## Bereavement.

### *The Solace of the Resurrection.*

By many a lonely grave has the sad mourner found himself standing, and as he has gazed on the green turf or on the smooth stone, has not cared to ask, Who will roll me away the stone? only because he or she whom he loved and laid there is not really beneath. But we can conceive an immortality of the soul without a resurrection of the body, and till Jesus Himself bade us hope for it, who could venture on the consolation, "Thy brother shall rise again"?

### *The Vision of Faith.*

It is not every one who can sincerely say, just at the moment of his loss, "The

Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord." Yet as the opened eyes of Elisha's servant saw the mountain round about Dothan full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha, so the eye of a mighty faith can discern the Divine Presence and rest in it, while others are conscious only of a thick darkness, and God seems lost out of His world. For it is faith, and nothing else, that can give the victory over the sharpness of pain, and the desolateness of bereavement, and the humiliation of sickness, and the necessities of poverty.

*The Love of the Departed.*

WHEN we weep for others let not our reasonable, our legitimate sorrow be embittered by rebelliousness, or exasperated by unbelief. If only we can indulge the humble hope that they are with Jesus, of this we may be well assured, that however much they love us and wish for our company—and they do continue to love us and wish for our company—it is not in the

direction of wanting to come back to us, but of wanting us to go up to them. If we can hope, with good grounds for our hope, that they are with Jesus, this too may we also hope, that Jesus is with us. He is the living bond between us both.

*The Chief Regret.*

WITH one regret, however, true love ever reproaches itself about those whom we have lost. We never seem to have loved them enough, or to have done enough for them, or to have borne with their faults as we ought to have borne, or to have taken the pains we ought to have taken. The feeling is generous, and when not carried to a morbid extent, may be even helpful, if only it stirs us up to live with each other and love each other as we shall wish we had done when the opportunity is past.

*Reasonableness in Sorrow.*

ONE truth may be here earnestly impressed, which needs to be impressed

gently, but firmly—that of soberness and self-restraint in sorrow. Let us not selfishly exact too much of others in their sympathy with us. Let us not be blind to the fact that the time will come to ourselves, when time, and the love of friends, and the routine of duty will, through God's mercy, tone down our grief, and move it from the surface into the foundation. It is not heartless in our children to go back after a time to their play. It is not unfeeling in our friends to speak of other things than the great loss that absorbs us so utterly. It is unreasonable to complain if the world at large returns to its own affairs after its dole of pity for us. Nay, it need not be fickleness in ourselves, if through the very laws of our own being we presently cease to feel broken and hopeless, and life seems to have something left to make it worth living. . . . We cannot ultimately resist the bent of moral laws, and none have been more inconsistent in their subsequent conduct, or made themselves more remarkable by the contrast between their first condition and their last,

than those who, in the uncontrolled extravagance of their early grief, announced to their friends that they would never smile again. . . . It is a false and injurious sentimentality that refuses to be comforted ; and that is the best type of human nature which simply orders itself according to the divine will, and, taking its place in a world which, if in some things it can never be quite the same again, still has much pleasantness left, enjoys the autumn as well as the spring, and though its May blossoms be over, is thankful for its Martinmas summer.

*The Need of Companionship.*

MUST the chair at our fireside always be left empty, though one who used to fill it can never fill it again? If the heart that is made to love aches for something fresh to love, why deny it its righteous desire? Why is the power of forming new affections confounded with fickleness or inconstancy? Because a man takes a wife to his heart, must he therefore be a less duti-

ful son, or a less kind brother? No doubt characters will, in this matter, differ materially. Yet, while we admire the tenacity of one man's nature, we need not frown on the fertility of another's. The wayside of life is quite lonely enough without our needlessly making it lonelier. Let us cheat the toil and cheer the way by giving and receiving sympathy. He who has most friends has most opportunities of making others happy as well as himself. He who suffers himself, as occasion offers, to replace a lost friend with a new one, will live in a garden, which will blossom in a perpetual summer, and will not be more likely to forget the old merely because he accepts the new. Every old friend was once a new one. True love, of whatever kind it is, will but strengthen and deepen in us love of every other kind.

*If We Could Have Foreseen.*

NOTHING can make us unlive the happy golden years when we walked side by side with those who are now in their graves,



Nay, if we could have looked forward, would we have refused our marriage vows because in the course of years one would be taken and the other left? Would we have preferred to go through the world childless, because the sadness of a little grave may for a moment seem worse than the stillness of an empty nursery? Would we have no joys in life, lest haply we lose them? Shall we refuse to love, because in front of us is the tomb? No, no! The heart says no. The reason says no. The conscience says no.

*Would We Bring Them Back?*

IF a wish could bring them back, could we have the heart to wish it, lonely and helpless though we be? Possibly it might not always be safe to give us the chance of it. Does the sick daughter never wish for one more glimpse of that wise and tender parent, who was father and mother in one? That little bright-haired girl that died just when she was taking her mother's place, and filling her father's

heart with a devouring love—is he so always at his best that he can cheerfully consent to leave her in Paradise with her mother and her Lord? Does the wife never wish for her husband back, just one half-hour, to consult him about the children, to tell him how she loves him, loves him, loves him, with a love that grows rather than decays, how long the time seems in front of her before she will be summoned to join him at home? And of our friends do we not sometimes say, “Oh, if he were but here, talking with me over the fire, and strengthening my heart with calm and manly advice! But he rests far away among the grey mountains, and I shall never see him again till others mourn for me.”

Still, let them go, let them go. Do not lay hold of their garments to keep them down on earth, but let them mount to their crown. Let your child have its blessed freedom from the soils and stains of wilful sin. Let your parents, whose hoary head was their crown of glory, have the rest they earned in the heat and

burden of the day. Do not, indeed, let them go because you cannot help yourself. That would be no sacrifice at all. Let them go, because the Lord who bought them wishes for them — because when once there the only thing they will wish for is to have us at their side.

## Disappointments.

DISAPPOINTMENTS are an experience of life with which all are familiar, and which at first sight is not quite so easy to explain, either as a merciful feature in the divine government, or as consistent with the truth of the divine sufficiency.

What varieties of disappointments meet us all in turn as we pass on through life! To begin with temporal things, the deepest, the saddest, the most abiding and inconsolable of all is disappointment in the affections, where the heart, surprised, it may be, into the discovery of its own aspirations, is, through the force of events,

foiled, and thrown back upon itself, with, for years afterwards, the painful feeling of the plan of its life crossed, and its bright opportunity gone, maybe, for ever. Roughly to scoff at this as mere sentimentalism is to ignore some of the most profound feelings of human nature under the cover of a sarcasm. Where men as well as women are equally liable to, and are equally wounded by the same disappointment, if it is an infirmity at all, it is at least one that human beings are born to. And to suppose that the Christian religion, the great glory and blessedness of which is, that it meets, and recognises, and covers every part of our nature only to educate, and elevate, and sanctify it, has no cure to offer for troubles of this kind; or that this one sorrow, which is capable of taking a far more complete hold of us than almost any other, is beneath the notice of Him who is the head of humanity, and the brother born for adversity, is to bring a heavier charge against the completeness of our divine faith, than even its worst enemies could bring—is

to suppose that when Christ invited the weary and heavy laden to come to Him for rest, He all along meant to refuse to heal the broken in heart, and to bind up all their wounds.

Think again of a professional man who has diligently prepared himself for the exercise of his calling, and who is conscious (it need not be unduly) of powers and gifts which, in obedience to a principle within him, he reasonably wishes to put out to use. But the opening does not come, the advancement is not offered, the place he feels to have earned does not turn up, and he lingers on in obscurity and poverty, with a keen sense of disappointment gnawing at his heart, and all spirit and energy dying out within him.

Or a child is anxiously longed for, under circumstances, it may be, that would make it a great joy and blessing : as when an heir is needed to carry on a name, and inherit a property ; or where the father is dead, and the widowed survivor looks for the promised treasure as the one thing life will be worth living for, a holy trust to be

cherished and fulfilled for God. It comes, and oh how the grateful heart blesses a kind God for His goodness! But after staying just long enough to let its mother discover its exceeding preciousness, or make its father's heart proud with joy, it returns to the God who gave it, and the solitude that was filled for a moment is more solitary, more desolate than before. . . . It was the joy of faith, that most elevating and ennobling of all human virtues and divine graces, whereby Job was enabled to say at the crisis of his overwhelming troubles, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," whereby Habakkuk could say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." . . . There may be a purpose of mercy deep in God's heart towards us, in thus teaching us not to look for our help and consolation from

any earthly instrument, however true in friendship, wise in counsel, strong in influence, or loving in nature. "The Lord is my Shepherd."

## Friendship.

### *The Value of Advice.*

ONE of the commonest uses of a friend is to ask his advice, and the value of that advice is always conditioned by two circumstances. One of them is our own sincerity in making the statement of our case exact and complete. The other is not so much his sagacity, or clear-headedness, or experience, in any extraordinary degree. If he has them, so much the better ; if not, it need not be very much the worse. Rather I mean the faculty he possesses of bringing to bear on our case a mind fresh to the facts, and a judgment unbiassed by them, so that while his regard for us stimulates him to do his best, there is no danger of his thinking himself into a fog,

or of being suddenly pushed by a strong current of prejudice into an irrevocable blunder. Your taking his advice is another matter. Even if you do not take it, it does not follow that you are not helped by it. Only to know what another mind thinks about our difficulty, is in itself no mean assistance.

*The Spiritual Help of Friendship.*

A FRIEND who will not despise us for our weakness, nor disown us for our sinfulness, nor tire of us for being troublesome, nor scoff at us for our sensibility, but who will patiently hear our tale, fully understand our regret, tenderly recognise our stumbling-blocks, and be honest enough to tell us the truth cost us what it may—oh, do you not see what a real help he might be to us; just because he loves us, understanding us thoroughly, and because he loves Christ, anxious to deliver us out of what puts Him to shame? Then when our tale is told, and the counsel given, if all is ended with tender and fervent prayer,



the conscience, lightened of its burden, hates sin more keenly than ever, the heart, with the sunshine of God's face on it, is bright with the Saviour's presence, and made glad by the sympathy of a friend, whose holy love represents Him to us.

No one, indeed, will be so foolish as to suppose that talking about our faults is the only or even the best way of getting rid of them, or of helping our brother to get rid of his. It is quite conceivable that some of us need checking rather than encouraging in this matter. Vanity creeps in everywhere; and can feed itself even on the story of sin. But do we, as we might, avail ourselves of each other's help in our spiritual difficulties? Here as elsewhere does not God often aid us through the ministry of man?

*A Friend's Best Service.*

SURELY the greatest service we can do our brother is to help him into goodness; and it is better to risk the resentment of a friend, who will thank us for it afterwards,

than to be untrue to Christ. There are opportunities of speaking, and delicacies of expression, and charities of silence, and preparations of prayer, which will occur to us all, and which reflection and practice will make perfect. Faithfulness need not be sharpness. Reproof, studied and prayed about, may be as gentle as the falling dew. This is certain, that again and again we find ourselves rewarded for having, in this way, inflicted worse pain on ourselves than on our brother, by his gratitude afterwards. To prevent sin is ever better than to deliver out of it, a result which a word of caution will often effect, and an act of sacrifice, perhaps clinch for ever.

*The Sweet Reasonableness of Friendship.*

A SWEET reasonableness lies at the root of all true friendship. We expect other people to make allowances for us, and we ought to be equally ready to make allowances for them. When a man becomes a bishop or a judge, goes into Parliament, or is deeply immersed in the duties of an

arduous function, official acquaintances are made for him, incessant engagements are forced on him. "Changed!" of course he is changed, and it is no fault of his. But if he sees less of his old friends than he did, it does not follow that he has forgotten them. If he has no longer at his disposal those lazy sunny hours in which the whole being loves occasionally to stretch itself, and in which our friends once enjoyed us, and we them, it is not he whom we should blame, but, if we think there is any good in it, his circumstances. Your friend has never really loved you, never quite trusted you, who lightly lets himself think that you have drifted away from him.

Busy men will be spared by those who care for them; public men must be waited for till they cease to be public, and are once more at leisure. There is an immortality in real affection, which is nourished by past memories, and future hopes; when the time comes, one sunny smile, one grasp of the old right hand gives it its resurrection.

*The Dread of Obligation.*

IT is hard to see why money alone is to be kept outside the circle of our Saviour's precept, "Freely ye have received, freely give." No doubt it would be a grievous injury to society at large, were the edge of the delicacy usually and properly felt in the matter of asking or receiving money to become seriously blunted ; and if, with persons of ordinary self-respect, it became as easy to ask for fifty pounds as for a pinch of snuff. But society is very well able to protect itself in this matter. There is a conscience which bids us say "no" in such questions, quite as much as say "yes." If a friend, whom you really care for, and who really cares for you, who has done you kindnesses in past years, and would do you a hundred more if he had the chance of doing them, has a boy to send to college, or a daughter to fit out for her wedding, or a heavy doctor's bill to pay, or a sick wife to send for a month to the sea-side, and has no money to do it with, why should you shrink from offering

him the help, which Providence puts in your power, and affection should suggest to you? Why should he be tempted to feel the weight of an intolerable obligation, because your help happens to take the shape of money, when his could be only—nursing you through a fever, or soothing your heart when sorrow had well-nigh broken it, or advising you with a ripe wisdom that blessed you all your life? Was Erasmus lowered by sitting at Warham's table; was not there an equal dignity for the primate who entertained the scholar; and for the scholar, who at once delighted and honoured him by his company? What does it really matter what I do for my friend, or my friend for me, if it is what he wants, and I have? It is a mean mind that is slow to do this service, and a vulgar one that declines it.

## Sympathy.

### *The Fruit of Suffering.*

OH, it is worth a good deal of suffering (and to many of us nothing but suffering brings it) to learn the power of sympathy with others; both in what it really is and means in itself, and how it soothes the lonely and vexed spirit for the burdens and fatigues of life. It was the peculiar glory of Christ. Let it be ours for Him. It is not pity, nor bland condescension, nor simpering patronage. It is tender, and delicate, and well-bred love. No doubt it comes to some of us much more easily than others. Yet we may pity the Christian who is quite devoid of it, and still more his friends. Christ's gifts are manifold, and no one must expect all. But this is indispensable. . . . Really to know how to comfort is one of the rarest as well as the blesseddest of the Christian virtues. It is not only saying the right thing, but saying it in the right way, and at the

right moment. Nay, sometimes it is not speaking at all—silence may be its most expressive channel. The look of the eye, the pressure of the hand, the very feeling that your mere presence creates of intelligent if helpless sadness is comfort. You cannot do it unless you have been through trouble yourself, nay, it takes years to acquire the subtle tact to feel the moment when you have said enough, and had better go away. Indeed, this art of consolation is a delicate art, only learned in the school of Christ, and its secret is love, built on experience. For when He consoles we learn and see it all. . . . What Christ desired, it can be no shame in us to desire. If sometimes it is refused to us, let us remember it was refused to Him, and His disappointment is ours.

*The Great Loss in Bereavement.*

PERHAPS the pain that lingers longest after bereavement is the sense of the loss of the sympathy of the wife or the mother just laid in the silent grave. That heart

so wide, so ready, so tender for our least troubles as well as our greatest—that cheek so often beaming with joy at our happiness, wet with tears over our troubles, are cold now and still, to welcome us no more till we have done with tears ourselves.

*What Sympathy Means.*

SYMPATHY is feeling *with* others, and it is quite a distinct thing from feeling *for* them. The latter is more of a quick and evanescent sentiment, good as far as it goes, but not often going far; laudable as long as it lasts, but not always lasting over the hour. Sympathy is *a habit*, or *temper of mind*, which means prayer and effort and sacrifice, and a sense of the common lot, with firmness and discrimination, and, best of all, “the mind of Christ”—a quality which, almost more than any other, makes religion a real and beautiful and practical thing; and helps men to believe that Christ still lives and pities and reigns. . . . Let us not forget our Apostle’s precept,



“ Rejoice with them that do rejoice,” and not be so ignorant as to suppose that men do not value sympathy with happiness, though they may need it more in sorrow.

*The Need of Experience.*

LET us be careful how, with the best meaning possible, we express sympathy with troubles and losses of which we have no sort of personal knowledge ; thereby, it may be, making our kindly intended consolations clumsy, ludicrous, or even painful. Let us leave it to those who do know what they are doing, and so avoid the danger of making a second wound in our attempt to heal the first. An earnest intercession to God that He will comfort as only He knows how, must be safe, must also be helpful. Inquiry, or a message, or some simple act of kindness, will convey the thing which you wish to express. The gathering years quickly bring their teaching with them. Let us wait till we are taught. Not every duty is laid on any man.

*The Help of Appreciation.*

MANY persons quite miss their career in life, or at least fall far short of the success of which naturally they are capable, because they have never found any one to give them credit for real capacity, and through not being believed in by others, they have been unable to believe in themselves. Sparing, opportune, conscientious, kindly commendation, written as well as spoken, given before near relations, who are not always alive to the presence of a prophet among them, and before enemies, or at least chilly acquaintances, who may treat you very differently afterwards for being made to feel that there are some who value you whose good-will is worth having, has the mint-mark of Christ's own sanction; it is sometimes one of the best lifts a young person can have when started in life; it is a wine of gladness to all of us in depression, solitariness, or disappointment; to give it in the right measure, and at the right moment, is a sort of genius.

## The Influence of Character.

CHRISTIANS are meant to be means of grace to each other, and too often are not. The value and power of influence who shall measure? It is the very air we breathe, and without knowing it. It is the irresistible, inevitable, continuous, pervasive effluence of our own personal character on those with whom we mix and live. No one knows how much he influences others, they hardly know it themselves; but the influence either heals or poisons, warms or chills, depresses or exhilarates, enfeebles or invigorates. A look, a gesture, a sigh, a movement, a smile, a frown, all tell, all influence. We are always influencing some one, and some one is always influencing us; and if the Holy Spirit of God has open access to mind and conscience, and heart and will, always, everywhere, our speech is for God, and our activities also; in our body and in our spirit we glorify God, who bought

us with a price that we might live to His praise.

## Conversation.

WHAT most people like to talk about is each other ; but this is exactly the topic that is so full of peril and so empty of good. If we talked of things instead of persons and pleasantly discussed daily events, art and books, and especially politics, which need not be fought over in a bitter and controversial spirit, but which ought to be full of interest to those who love their country, in the place of clothes and entertainments and novels, our daily life would be education instead of dissipation ; and we should insensibly acquire what Lord Beaconsfield described as the highest wisdom in the best way—not from books, but from the lips of men. . . .

Fellowship with brother Christians on the great blessed realities which we hold and love in common, if wisely arranged and safeguarded with wise restrictions, may become a real means of grace. It may

mean a handful of friends meeting together over their Bibles, in hope of also meeting their Lord. It may also be confined to the intercourse of two individual souls. It is not to be forced ; and if artificial and self-displaying, it becomes hurtful, and when unreal acts like a moral poison. It is more than doubtful if we use it as much as we ought to use it. At such moments which bring into the horizon of our own experience the walk to Emmaus, a third sometimes joins us ; and though presently He disappears, the recollection beatifies our life. . . . There are four great moral qualities which we should aim at if we would serve God with our words day and night, naturally, easily, successfully, and almost without knowing it. Let there be reserve in our talk. A nature that has no reserve has no dignity. Let us have tact, not only of breeding, but, which is much higher and better, of nature. Also let us be brave, gently, quietly brave ; saying what we think wants to be said, and all of it, but with a modest diffidence, and an evident desire to learn

as well as to teach. Then society will be better for us and we for society. We shall be fulfilling the idea of Jesus in being the salt of the earth.

## Sitting in Judgment.

REAL goodness appreciates the difficulty of resisting evil, and the righteousness which cares more for condemning than forgiving is lacking in that divine and essential charity which is the mind of Christ. It may be inevitable, and also becoming, that we pass judgment in the secret place of our conscience on acts and persons which come under our review. It does not by any means follow from that as a matter of course that it is either incumbent on us or right for us to express that judgment either in words or in writing for the information of others. Yet to some people, without doubt, the chief satisfaction in forming a judgment, notably if it be an unfavourable one, is at the earliest possible moment to communicate it to some one

else. If it be our duty to make it known to others, let the terms in which we express it be guarded, moderate, and with as little as possible of the knife in them. To be found guilty is, to a sensitive and good though erring nature, often punishment enough in itself.

## Censure and Unkindness.

WHILE the happiest condition is that of ignorance of what others unkindly or thoughtlessly say of us, usually there are people enough who, either out of an odd consideration of what friendship demands or a spiteful impulse of what envy suggests, protect us from living in a fool's paradise by sending us bad news of ourselves, as a kind of duty, in a letter with no name to it. If we are very wise, we shall not treat such communications as some undoubtedly strong-minded people do, throw them into the fire unread, when we find no signature to them ; nor, in the

opposite extreme, fret and trouble ourselves about them, as if such criticisms deserved more than a mere passing notice, to be glanced at, considered, and then forgotten. Archbishop Tait, as his biographers inform us, always read such letters for the information or advantage that might be derived from them. Undoubtedly they come in the providence of God, just as hornets and centipedes come, with some function to fulfil. Those who watch such things, and love to trace the divine purpose in everything, will occasionally notice that they are apt to come in moments of personal elation when the bladder of self-love is blowing itself a little too full, or when the kindness of friends and the sunshine of some unlooked-for prosperity need the counteracting monition that we should walk humbly with God. . . . When we are censured, justly or unjustly, no matter how or by whom, there is a rule we should follow, a baseness we should avoid, and a gain we should ensure. The rule is to take it instantly to God and ask Him to tell us His mind about it in His own tender,



wise, and truthful way. This will take the poison out of the wound and the resentment out of the nature. The baseness is to go to the world and whimper about it. Such things a really strong man, in the reserve ever indicative of a manly nature, will usually keep to himself, and not consent to share with wife or friend or child. The gain is, even from the exaggerated censure to gather the wholesome reproof, and to learn better how to breathe the saint's prayer, "Nearer, my God, to Thee; nearer to Thee.

## Letter-Writing.

### *Willingness to Help.*

ALL those who look up to us, or depend on us, should feel able to write to us when they please, not indeed for the advice which only professional knowledge can supply, but for the lessons of experience and for the counsels of friendship.

*Condolence.*

IF we go beyond our own experience of sorrow in the letters we write about it, we risk being unreal, we ensure being useless. Those who know nothing of the unspeakable blessedness of married life (when it is happy), should not console too minutely the desolateness of widowhood. Unless you have laid your own child in the grave, take care how you approach an absolutely unimaginable sorrow. While it is impossible to be too tender, let the tenderness be Christian tenderness; the sympathy of one who, sure of the Lord's love, does his best to impart it through sacred channels. Common sense can do but little; philosophy can do nothing; mere human love at the most can but hope, and be silent. But with the Bible in our hand, with the Holy Ghost in our hearts, with the words of the Risen Saviour on our lips, we can reach the mourner, when no one else can reach him. We can soothe him, when almost with fretfulness he puts other consolations away.

*Letters to Children.*

As for letters to our children, whether young or grown up, in the country or out of England, both for them and for us, the more frequently we write the better. A lad at school, or a youth at college, a sailor on board ship, or a young clerk in a London counting-house, a daughter who is a wife as well as a child, a son whose own children in his own home explain a father's love and point a father's duties, are always the better for being happily and periodically reminded that there are old ties as well as new, blood relations as well as social; that a parent's love is worth more than a stranger's good-nature; and that there is one home in the world where the door is ever flung wide to receive them, and sure never to be closed except to profligacy and dishonour. It is likely enough that a schoolboy may not much care for a very long letter, but it is an immense mortification when no one writes to him; and the worst kind of hardening that can happen to a boy's nature is that

which comes from his affections being despised.

*Old Ties.*

HAVE you a sick sister, whose lonely life has but few bright clouds in it? Now and then make her feel that she is not utterly forgotten by the friend and companion of her happy childhood. Is there an old acquaintance whom you seldom see, but whom you ought not to forget; who knew and loved you when you were both children together, and who still prizes your friendship, though it is of little use to him? Now and then write to him. "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not." Is there a servant, retired from your service, who has nursed your children, been a kind and true friend to you in sad and dark hours, who is growing old, as you yourself some day will grow old, with few changes in a dull life, and few pleasures in a poor one? Occasionally send a message to that dear though humble friend, if not always in your own hand, at any rate, by

your wife or child. It will stir thoughts of slumbering happiness in a kind heart that has loved you with a love as good as a rich man's love, and served you with a service that no mere wages could repay. Or have you aged parents, living far away, it may be, in some remote home, whose monotonous and ever-shortening life is never so pleasantly broken as by news of you ; whose midnight thoughts and noon-day musings are ever full of you ; who grow young and brave in the thought of your success, and whose constant prayers have much more to do with it than you know of? Never let them feel that you are too busy to think of them, or too important to care for them. Visit them when you can ; you will not have them much longer ; but regularly *make time* to write.

*Noblesse Oblige.*

EVEN if a little child asks you to write to it, do so if you can. To make a little child happy is to help to make it good, and to make any one good is a service fit

for an angel. Then, just in proportion as people are poor, or insignificant, or friendless, or gone down in the world, should we answer their letters as soon as possible. Merely as men and women they deserve justice as much as other people, and certainly they want more comforting.

*The Danger of Festing.*

A WISE man will seldom joke with his pen. . . Walking with a friend, you can say almost what you please to him. The twinkle of your eye, or the nudge of your arm, will give to your words the direction and the impression that you desire. Precisely the same sentences, when put into matter-of-fact black and white, and posted to be read in some dull village, will possibly be misunderstood, brooded over, and magnified until a harmless pleasantry festers into an irritating sore.

*Letters to be Kept.*

IT is surely the common instinct of an entire and covetous love to keep with

jealous and tender care both the letters of our betrothal, and, so far as possible, the letters of our married life. The day may come when they will be wanted, when the one who is left will be glad even of a piece of paper to recall the days that can never return, through the poor and faint echoes which pen and ink can awaken of a beloved voice hushed in the stillness of the grave. . . .

Letters which point the events of life are always worth keeping; those, for instance, which we receive when we are about to be married, or when we are advanced, or when the first child is born, or when death invades us. Most men put away those in which great men have recognised them, or good men addressed them kindly. Clergymen are certainly wise to keep letters that bear on their ministry, and occasionally to read them again. Sluggishness may be stirred, self-indulgence put to shame, faith roused, zeal animated, by the quiet reading of letters written twenty years ago, testifying to the first love of our young ministry—when we

did not know how to do enough for Christ and His Church—from souls long ago passed into their rest, perhaps through words and prayers of ours.

*Letters to be Destroyed.*

LETTERS which disclose family secrets, or expose the error and misconduct of others, may be productive of distress and inconvenience by falling into strange hands, and in most cases it is best to destroy them as soon as may be. Let us put temptation out of our way, by tearing up angry and vindictive letters, instead of treasuring them up in safe hiding-places, one day to feed a resentment that was well-nigh dead. If it is generous toward our neighbour, it is good and prudent for ourselves to put it quite out of our power to fling back at him, the next time he vexes us, the handwriting that condemns him to his face.



## Usefulness.

THE duty which no one can disclaim, the test which no one may evade, and the praise which no one will despise, are all included in the homely word of usefulness. Who will say that it is not his duty to be useful? Who will pretend that he cannot be useful if only he cares to be? Who will deny that, after all, the most equitable verdict on a man's life, when it is done, will be passed on the amount of usefulness that can be discovered in it? We admire a man's brilliancy, or we envy his capacity, or we listen to his eloquence; but a man may be brilliant and capable and eloquent, and yet the world may not be much the better for him, possibly even the worse. But to say that a man is useful—in other words, that he has served God and his generation with such gifts as were at his disposal, and earned, when he died, the two great rewards, of being missed and being regretted—is, after all, the greatest commendation that a human soul can receive.

## Work and Sanctification.

How work is a factor in our personal sanctification is best discovered when we are compelled to lay it aside, and thereby miss the brisk circulation it imparted to our life, and the wholesome check it brought to bear on self-love and laziness. Most have discovered in it the true and instant and manly consolation in trouble, partly helping us to forget it, showing us in the affliction of others to whom our duties take us, that ours is no isolated woe, no strange example of inequitable pain. If it is a proof of God's confidence in us that He condescends to call us to serve Him, it is also an evidence of His contentment with us, when one duty becomes the pathway to another, and he that is faithful in that which is least is invited to be faithful in that which is much—the much not indeed to be looked for either in honour or emolument, as in capacity for doing good in the world. Sometimes we think that if we have been making some sacrifice for God,

we may expect it will be recognised by material blessing. The sacrifice is required by the occasion of a higher and bigger one.

## The Secret of Work.

THE secret of work that glorifies God and manifests our sonship is activity without friction, sympathy without feebleness, and devotion without effort. Not to waste time, and also to learn without making life fretful for ourselves and intolerable to others, how to husband and use its tiniest fragments ; to recognise and seize opportunities, which are the critical moments of usefulness, and which bear the labouring ship on the crest of the wave ; to have a deep and growing appreciation of the vast results of the quickly passing moments on the coming eternity, as if each act and word was a seed-germ of incalculable importance for the great spaces in front ; to have tenacity without stubbornness, concentration without onesidedness, self-know-

ledge without egotism—here is the secret of getting done before we go part at least of the task we started with, when our serious life began ; here, too, is the keeping hold of that continuity of life and purpose, which makes even the humblest career a kind of epic with the angels in Heaven. Who can even imagine how much well-meant work is either quite wasted or so poorly done that no reward is earned by it, through desultoriness of nature, and levity of purpose, and a limpness of the nerves of the will? Not thus may Christians fill their niche in the temple of glorified souls, and leave their mark on men. So, let each of us ask ourselves, “What can I do best? What am I really attempting to do? Is it being done? How?” We have each of us distinct stages in our life, with duties, trials, opportunities, proper to them. There is no leisure to waste on the irrecoverable past. We cannot go back to pick up anything that we have dropped or forgotten. We live actually in the present. Let us fill it with grave and solid and cheerful duty.

## Unweariedness in Well-doing.

LOFTY sacrifices and deaths of agony which write themselves in letters of fire on the memory of the world are rare and within the scope of few. Nay, heroic as they are, and seem to be to the bulk of men and women, they are by no means so difficult as patient continuance in well-doing. Mr. Maclaren, I think, has observed somewhere that where ten might be ready quickly and sharply to die for Christ, only one would consent really to live for Him.

## Self-denial for Christ's Sake.

*Charity is better.*

“EVERY creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving.” So writes an Apostle. Yet, if liberty is good, charity is better. “So speak ye and so do, as they that shall be

judged by the law of liberty." May God in His mercy give us, when we murmur at the greatness of our petty sacrifices, first to look up at His Son's Cross, and then back at the days, when for His dear sake, gentle women faced the lions, and boys went bravely to die, and the cruel flames leaped upon faces that were radiant with the ecstasy of martyrdom ; and perhaps, worst of all, children suffered before the very eyes of their parents still constant to Christ.

*The Use of Intoxicants.*

THAT to make or sell or in moderation use such things is to defy God and to tempt man, is a baseless and mischievous paradox. Shall we cast a slur on the spotless Saviour, who first manifested His glory in the turning of water into wine, presumably for the enjoyment of His fellow-guests ; who was Himself called a wine-bibber, and took no pains to deny the fact, though He observed the inconsistency of the accusation ; who in ordaining the blessed sacrament which is to us at

once the memorial of His death, the promise of His return, the vehicle of His presence to the faithful, and the spiritual communion of those who feed on Him there, deliberately ordained wine as one of the elements of the Eucharistic feast? If it is lawful to use it, it must be lawful both to make and to sell it. What we should inexorably press is the prevention of adulteration, the diminution of perilous facilities, the curtailing of the hours of sale, the protection of young girls and children from public-houses, and the steady and reasonable temperate education of public opinion.

“Am I not free?” once asked St. Paul. So might Christians say now. Though at the present moment English society betrays no sign of being infected with either Manicheism or asceticism, it is natural and even equitable to decline to have our liberty snatched from us at the point of the bayonet. “Why should I be judged by another man’s conscience?” “Every man shall give account of himself to God.” But liberty is a large word;

and if I am free to use these things, I am free not to use them ; and if to cherish liberty for my own sake is a good thing, to surrender it for my brother's sake may be better. I will not judge my brother because he uses these things temperately, but he shall not prevent me (he may despise me if he pleases) from giving up a small indulgence if it helps me to put out a long and strong arm to snatch out of the deep waters a poor drowning soul, which sympathy and kindness and quick effort may, with God's blessing, rescue and restore. We will not praise ourselves for what we do, nor flaunt it in the world's face, nor think to convince or persuade by any other method than reason and truth blessed by the Spirit of God. But let us remember that if men are to be left to die because they deserve it, and we will do nothing to save them because they have no claim on us, and we defend our contention as reasonable and just, how can we explain the mystery of the Incarnation, which had its exemplary as well as atoning value? How do



we expect to escape the reproach in one of the most terrible of all our Lord's parables, "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me. Shouldst not thou also have compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?"

*Going to the Theatre.*

ANOTHER opportunity for the exercise of this spirit of sacrifice (I tread on ashes over living fire) is in the use and enjoyment of the drama. Let us frankly make some admissions which justice and observation and common-sense may perhaps make us more than willing to make. They ought to be made, and to make them may be of service. There is a dramatic instinct in human nature, delightfully perceptible even in a little child, which presumably, like other instincts, was deliberately placed there by the all-wise Creator, and which, under suitable conditions, is meant to be cultivated and indulged. Men must have their recreation;

and the Church will do well to remember that one of the most important points in the training and governing of a nation is the supply of cheap, abundant, and wholesome recreation ; and without dispute, in the long winter nights the place where it ought to be found is a cheap and wholesome, well-conducted theatre. Some of us indeed can go so far as to say distinctly that in our judgment no enjoyment comes near to the drama for its exhilarating and recuperative power.

But the question is, Can it be right for us as Christians to go there ourselves, when (notwithstanding the efforts of the cultivated and high-spirited artists who now preside over the stage, and whose sincerity of purpose in elevating and purifying we have every desire to recognise), the ballet dancing, the tone, the atmosphere, the allusions, the occasional coarseness it is impossible for us to encourage, with any sense of responsibility for others, by our presence and example? While we presume to pass judgment on no one who frequents the theatre ; while we cheerfully

admit that Shakespeare's plays, acted as they are acted now, are of educational as well as recreative value; while we hope for the time when a purified drama not confined to the greatest of English poets may become the safe and elevating resource of all Englishmen, clergy and laity, young and old; nay, while we will do what we can, each in his own way, to help that time on, the time has not yet come when it would be prudent for those who dislike the tone of the modern theatre themselves to frequent it in the hope of mitigating or removing its evils. The Church would only become more worldly and society more immoral. "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

*Sunday Observance.*

ONCE more, there is the increasingly important question of Sunday observance. Some things are quite clear about this

almost greatest of subjects ; other things not so clear. To set apart one day in the week for relaxation from business, for domestic intercourse, for bodily rest, for contemplation of the things which are not seen and are eternal, is agreeable to the will of God, is inferentially imposed by the Fourth Commandment, is the charter of the artisan's security, is that which more than anything else, to borrow a striking expression of Bishop Temple, keeps us in touch with God. It is also clear that it is not on identical lines with the Jewish Sabbath, that our Lord left us no rules about it, and that it is a matter in which every Christian man, according to his light and knowledge, must be a law to himself. On the exercise of this law I would suggest one last word. Let us not use all our liberty merely because it is ours, if so to use it would scandalise or injure our neighbour. Let us not suppose that what is harmless to us must be harmless to others. Most of all, let us remember that the one end of it is the worship of God and the edification of the personal soul,

and that the law holds good here as elsewhere, the law of sacrifice. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."

*To do Good hoping for Nothing.*

NEVER to despair of any one as helpless, never to despise a soul which the Saviour bought with His blood, is a golden rule for all. To be willing to take trouble is the great condition of being useful to others; to be prepared to make sacrifices is the only way to success. Then we must not be too much afraid of being taken in, or of being disappointed, or of being treated with ingratitude. "To do good, hoping for nothing again," is the Master's lofty command. Only one of the ten lepers came back to thank Christ for being cured. Of the hundreds and thousands whom He taught, fed, and healed, how many stood by Him at His cross? For my own part, I would not give much for the man who is never taken in. His cleverness and in-

sight probably do not run much risk, and he who is so constantly on his guard against the mischief of mistaken kindness may come in the end to have neither heart nor courage for kindness at all.

## Old Age.

### *Its Contented Work.*

THERE is something more of an idyllic sentimentalism than of actual and personal experience in the unclouded sunshine supposed to belong to the later autumn days. In the evening time it is light, and the clouds are lit up by the dropping sun ; but before they break into glory, they are often cold, dense, and grey. This allowed for, the depression that is plainly physical should be sturdily reasoned with, looked behind, and dismissed as no sort of exact indication of real usefulness. Work *must* change with our years, and is meant to change, both in its substance, measure,

and quality. But mellowness of judgment is often more than an equivalent for diminished bodily vigour. Experience should not only correct mistakes, but, what is much better, it should prevent them. Less work done with more completeness may serve the Church better than more work done, perhaps, crudely, and hastily. The Psalmist's sentence about bringing forth more fruit in old age has a happy and clear fulfilment, when the pen prolongs the message of the voice, and the brain, still fresh, though perhaps not quite so rapid as of old, makes compensation for the flagging of the limbs. Moreover, it is true, and meant to be true, that if our lives are spared long enough, our work must reach its limit both in gift and in strength. "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening." When it is evening, "there remaineth a rest to the people of God." Let us take the rest, accept the dismissal, and be thankful, with a deep and wondering gratitude, that we have ever been used at all.

*The Beauty of Old Age.*

THE perfection of old age is “wisdom without cynicism,” and a faith in the purpose of God, which deepens and widens with the years. To look round on the scene, which we are so soon to leave, and still to admire and enjoy, and try, if possible, to improve it; to be interested in the young, who will soon fill our place, dissect our motives, and inherit our labours—not, perhaps, with too much respect and sympathy; to hope about a future which we shall have no opportunity of helping; to grow in spiritual vision, even if our intellectual force decays; to spread charity, to accept consolation, to avoid a morose solitariness, to welcome all opportunities of making others happy—here is the glory of old age, when the grand hope of immortality sweetens and dignifies it.

*Ghosts of the Past.*

ONE circumstance often goes to make the gathering waters of our last hours chilly



and deep. Results are coming in. Mistakes are unfolding themselves, disappointments bite us with a sharp and jagged tooth. Opportunities which, now that they are gone, we appreciate at their value, we have missed, and who can bring them back? These ghosts of the past (who does not know them in one shape or another?) come to us at all moments and in all places. The happiness of other homes seems to taunt us with our own disorder. The diligent and prosperous sons of other fathers fill us with covetous hope, or stir us to an agony of prayer. Something in the street as we pass recalls them to us; and there are some troubles which act like a seton in the heart. At night before we sleep, in the dark morning long before it is time to rise, they banish repose or make it impossible. They come, and they go, and they return, for they are always with us. It needs manhood to bear them without sharing them with others; it needs faith, almost a sublime faith, to be well assured that all things, and even these

among the all, are permitted, and can be overruled for blessing.

## The Approach of Death.

*Our Times are in God's Hands.*

"My times are in God's hands" is the one thought which gives peace, dignity, and hope. Until our Master summons us, not a hair of our head can perish, not a moment of our life be snatched from us. When He sends for us, it should seem but the message that the child is wanted at home. . . . Of two things we may be quite sure. That God in His righteousness is pledged to give us abundant time for the "good works, which He has before ordained that we should walk in them." Also that if we choose to do what He has not ordained us to do, either less or more, bigger or smaller, it is our own presumption, not His injustice, that we should blame, if we have not sufficient time for properly doing them, and so they are not

done. Christ's twelve hours, so far as His ministry was concerned, lasted perhaps three years, or four at the utmost. (John Baptist's may have been six months.) Yet before He suffered, He could say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." As He died, He said, "It is finished." But though the twelve hours allotted to us are sufficient, they are only twelve, and are not more than we need. Our Lord evidently felt the time to be short. Though the eternal Son, "the Ancient of Days," He voluntarily submitted Himself for our sakes to its limitations. "I must work the work of Him which sent me while it is day." He felt there was only one day for Him, with but twelve hours in it. It is not the length of life, it is the quality of it, that glorifies God. Sometimes a life of thirty years is of more significance to the race and more honour to God than a life of ninety.

*The Desire to Live.*

It is easy to think of our neighbour dying, but the vital instinct within us

steadily repels the prospect from ourselves; and it is often necessary to summon reason as well as imagination to our rescue, and to think calmly and clearly about it, if we would actually face the thought, that the wings of the Angel of Death are rustling over *our* bed, even *ours*. The young are sometimes impatient to die. The old are often content to die. But men in the prime of life mostly wish to live. And even the Christian may desire to live, without in anywise dishonouring the Master, who says, when He sends for him, "Come up hither." It is not, that he doubts that Heaven once gained would be a sufficient recompense, that Christ once seen and adored would be worth more to his soul than wife, and children, and friends. But as we grow older, our sense of the preciousness of life grows. There are plans we want to accomplish, or books we long to write, or friends we desire to influence, or children we ought to rear. To many of us health is capital. To all of us life is a talent never to be regained. It is true, that if

we are to go, willingness to go is mercifully given to us : it is also true, that when we are spared, our love of life, as well as our love of God, fills us with thankful joy. There will be blessed service in Heaven, but there will be no more going out after lost sheep in the wilderness, *so far as we know* ; the brightness of the crown will be won, and our work here over, when our feet have once been planted within the Paradise of God.

*In the Great Emergency.*

DEATH is a tutor for us all in the schooling of the love of Jesus. While nothing quite apart from our own interest in it so forcibly strikes the moral imagination as the spectacle of Christ dying for the world, which at once despised and destroyed Him, so nothing so forcibly or continuously impresses the awfulness of our mortality, the solitariness of our personal existence, the responsibility which no one can share, the dissolution which nothing can postpone. Hour by hour it is coming to meet us ;

everything else is uncertain—the place, the time, the shape in which it will come. That it will come we may forget, but we cannot deny. In that supreme moment to be able to fall back on Him who has tasted death for us, because He loved us more than His own life, and who has taken away both the fear and the sting and the loneliness of it, because He has passed through it and conquered it, has died for our sins, and risen again for our justification—what a blessed peace this, and what a noble hope! In that hour He will stand by us, and say, “Fear not, for I am with thee.” The love that endured death and triumphed over it, will then steal into our souls, and help us as we pass to see His face and catch His smile.

*Our Last Earthly Service.*

To some, if not to all, death is the last occasion, with the living at least, and on this side of the invisible world, of glorifying God; of manifesting, not only by activity, but by patience not only by going about,

but by lying still ; not only by speaking, but by silence ; not only by emotion, but by faith, what the love of Christ is to those who can trust Him with everything, and how even the travail of death is but a fuller birth of the soul into the light and glory of God. There are circumstances when to leave children and duty behind us means agony. To suffer is not sinful. A stolid passionless torpor is not at all the temper that magnifies Christ or edifies men. But keenly and largely to value all we are leaving and yet to manifest as well as to say, that "to depart and be with Christ" "is far better," means a testimony that may bring souls to Christ long after we have gone to Him ; preaches a sermon that shall go on repeating its message when we are singing the new song with the angels of God.

### *The Death of Christ.*

CHRIST has tasted death, tasted it for every man, and in anticipation of it His human soul trembled and quivered with

suffering, though when the moment of departure came He fell asleep in peace. No one but Christ knows what it really means to die. No one but Christ can assure us that not a hair of our head shall perish, as we pass on our solitary journey into the invisible world. We cannot tell all that this will mean to us when we want it, for He does not comfort till the time of comforting arrives. But if we are sure of Him and of our interest in Him, we may be as sure as of our own existence that His personal experience will enable Him to feel, to meet, to soothe the secret and individual tremors of each separate soul as it makes its flight to Him; that "He is able also to save to the uttermost" all that come unto God by Him.

### *The Anguish of Death.*

To escape all tremor and sadness, and even anguish in death, might mean to miss an untold and vast blessing, which would make all the difference both to our last years on earth and to our entrance as well



as our place in Paradise ; nay, it might be to forfeit all that beautiful, though often sharp, discipline which He who loves us with a holy love cannot spare us, just because He loves us, and which we should not wish Him to spare us, if we knew all that it intends. " This light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

*The Right View of Death.*

THERE are two extremes in men's views of death. One is to make too little of it ; the other is to make too much of it. Let us do neither. If Christ has abolished death, and if there is a permanent meaning in His words to Martha, "Whoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," there is something unchristian and even degrading in treating or anticipating it, as if we lived and died amid the shadows of a pagan world. Yet, when we think from what it separates us, and to what it introduces us, what it will mean

for the human soul in its nakedness and feebleness to appear before God, and what a tremendous thing it will be presently to receive at the Judge's hand all the things that we have done in the body here, there is something almost appalling in the ever-nearing approach of the divine messenger. Even St. Paul, who sings his majestic pæan over it, does not scruple to speak of it as an enemy to be overcome; but he adds for our consolation that it is the last enemy we shall ever have to meet, and that we shall not meet it alone. The holiness of God, the inevitableness of judgment, the end of opportunity, are tremendous realities. But against them all we have this triumphant challenge: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" After all, the secret of secrets is to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and to look out from the pavilion of His indwelling presence on the gathering waterfloods and the boisterous river. He rewards faith with perfect peace, and to the soul that looks to Him He tenderly whispers, "I am thy salvation."

## The Resurrection.

### *The Basis of Faith.*

GRATEFULLY as we bow before the Cross, devoutly as we say and penitently, "Was ever sorrow like that sorrow, or love like that love?" had there been only a cross and a grave, with no crowning after the cross, no rising out of the grave, the world would still be in its sins, and Death king. The Resurrection is not only the guarantee of our redemption by Christ, it is an important and culminating part of it. When Christ died man was redeemed, and when He rose, man was justified, but when He ascended, man was crowned.

### *The Miracle of Miracles.*

IF Christ is not raised, there is no redemption for the race. If Christ is not raised, then He deceived Himself, and

disappointed His followers. Yet nothing is more certain than that, before He died, He repeatedly told them that after He had died He should rise again. Nothing is more certain than that they did not understand Him when He said it, and that, after His death, not one of them consoled himself with the hope of His resurrection. Nothing further is more certain than the slowness and bewilderment with which they accepted the fact of His resurrection when He at first appeared to them. Nay, so slow, so reluctant were they to accept it, that, in the words of an Evangelist, "He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen." Once more, nothing is more certain than that, when they were finally and completely convinced of it, they were never moved out of their conviction, or shaken in their habit of proclaiming it as the keystone of their glorious message. It is hardly too much to say that it had an absolutely transforming power on their entire spiritual nature,

It at once inspired them with an irresistible enthusiasm, and inflamed them with an unspeakable joy.

*The Pledge of Immortality.*

ON the side of man there are at least two cogent and irrepressible reasons for suggesting a life to come and the resurrection, which summons us to it, and equips us for it. One is duty, the other love. "Duty is a vast power, and needs a vast world to work in." But what paralyses and depresses us for duty is the chilling thought that we shall never get but a very small part of it done. What is so apt to daunt us in the inception of great plans, or the persevering with vast experiments, or the inventing and starting of noble philanthropies, is the inevitable thought that soon we may be called away before even a very small part of our design is accomplished, and then out of our cold white fingers the thread of the web will drop, which no other hand will weave into our design. The thought of

eternity in front—wherein to pick up broken threads, and to perfect self-culture, and to see as we are seen, and to know as we are known—makes men of us, and instantly sets us free with the glorious liberty of the children of God. So, too, with love. If there is no resurrection, if death, instead of being an event in life, is the end and grave of it, why am I capable of loving others—why are others capable of loving me? This soul of mine, with its affections, aspirations, hopes, aims, and longings, becomes the most gratuitous and unaccountable machine of deliberate moral torture that the human mind can conceive. But if in the Father's house there are many mansions, and if some of His children are in the upper storey and others in the lower, while all are beneath the same roof, all breathing the same atmosphere, all looking for one Saviour, all sustained by one food, then the life I live is something "more than an insect's life;" then, strange as it still appears that on such a short trial such eternal issues should hang, I begin to love here, that I

may go on to love there. When God made me in His own image, it was that I might live and know and love and worship and serve for ever and ever.

## Heaven our Home.

### *Across the Clouded Borderland.*

To gaze eagerly, timidly, but earnestly, across the clouded borderland, and with an open Bible and an obedient heart to try to think out some at least of the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, is a reasonable, even a beautiful solace for those who sometimes need a sip of heavenly cordial for the tired hours of a waning life ; who, on their way to see the King in His beauty, wish to know more exactly what that beauty will be.

### *The Silence of Christ.*

CHRIST as a Teacher came to reveal God, to spiritualise worship, to proclaim

forgiveness, to demand faith. What He omitted is perhaps as remarkable as what He expounded; and though all He did and taught was to impress on men the importance of the present life as continuous with, and in a sense resulting from, the life on the other side of death, He never, except in the case of a single parable, lifted up the curtain that separates the visible and invisible worlds. We must wait until we are there to know.

*The Folly of Spiritualism.*

THE spirit-world with its invisible multitudes, its unfathomed capacities, its unknowable occupations, has been deliberately shut off from us by a curtain of darkness. To strive to peep into that world, to filch its secrets, and to converse with its inhabitants, and to discover what they think, and feel, and do, by any mechanical jugglery, such as that which seems to fascinate many, whose faith is not strong enough to confess a living God, but whose superstition is base enough to



attempt communion with the dead, is, to my mind at least, a far more shocking phenomenon than the corrupt animalism of the Mormons; comes nearer (if there is anything serious in it) to devil-worship than anything we have lately seen in Western Christendom.

To suppose, even for a moment, that He who has the keys of Death and Hades would permit spirits in discipline to break their awful captivity just to gratify the inquisitive caprice of a knot of triflers, is a grave insult to His divine majesty. Is He more likely to spare from Paradise, for the same unworthy reason, the saints who see His face and hear His word?

Of the invisible forces of the evil spirits, their number, their varieties, their activities, their permitted liberty, we know hardly anything; though, indeed, what we do know is hardly matter for a buffoon's jesting. But, if we are in any sense Christians, we may be well assured that they too have limits which they cannot transgress, and boundaries which they may not pass over. Indeed,

one hardly knows whether to smile with contempt on what, if it be only a folly, is a very horrible folly ; or to denounce with indignation what, if it is a sin at all, is a very ghastly sin. Assuredly it is not a pastime to be safely played at. No reverent or believing heart should risk, even for what may euphemistically be called a phantasy or experiment of science, a grave dishonour to the kingdom and supremacy of Christ. Christ will not answer a word to such audacious attempts to force the barriers He has inflexibly imposed upon us. If there ever does seem to be an answer—and I fear to provoke a smile by hinting the possibility of it—it must be either the impudent fraud of a designing charlatanism, or the voice of one whose works the Son of God took flesh to destroy.

*Where Heaven Is.*

As to the place of that joy and home, it has been remarked that our Lord's teaching in no degree meets or satisfies our

intellectual curiosity. He preached and revealed immortality by His ideal of goodness, incomprehensible except for the hope of a life to come. A thoughtful divine [Dr. Newman Smyth] also observes: "A real difficulty for our instinctive faith in immortality lies in the impossibility of finding any place within the bounds of space, where we may suppose the scenes of the future life to be located. The sky nowhere gives to our astronomers the faintest suggestions of a place for heaven. This visible universe is made throughout of the same perishable stuff; it is of one piece and is growing old. We must look for Heaven not anywhere under the stars, but in the other invisible hemisphere of the universe. It is not a part of the present visible creation, and shall not pass away with the dissolving world. Heaven with its abiding life is in the unseen, out of which the worlds appeared, and into which all their glory shall depart. Heaven is the end of all the Creator's ways." . . .

Heaven will be the Vision of Christ!  
We can indeed trust Him in that hour to

be all that we need, more than ever we can ask or think, as He fills us with the rapture of His love, and looks us through and through with holy searching glad tenderness. Yet it will be a marvellous moment, when the soul first meets and beholds the Saviour, who died to redeem it. The sense of sin may be well swallowed up in the joy of redemption ; but the very thought that these sinful eyes shall one day see Him as He is, is a Gospel of ineffable gladness, tempered with an unspeakable awe! . . . . Heaven will be a society of those who are saved, and those who have helped to save, of those who have worked side by side, been parted, and then been united again. In that day sacrifices will have their recompense, and the crown of thorns be exchanged for the crown of victory. Of all kinds of gratitude a human soul can feel, until Heaven is reached we shall not fully know how the sweetest and the deepest is the gratitude of a soul saved to the soul that helped to save it.

*The Glorified Body.*

IT may be that the body which our Lord assumed during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, is to be the pattern and type of ours. In that body, as we read, He appeared and disappeared, as it pleased Him ; He ate and drank ; He inspired an awe and sense of majesty such as before His death His apostles never seem to have felt about Him ; in His ascension into Heaven He transcended at His will the usual laws of our material being. They knew Him again, when He wished to be known again, and He was a stranger when He wished to be a stranger. Whether this was His normal condition, or only a transitional one to meet their needs and condescend to their infirmities, the Gospels do not explain.

*A New World.*

IN that home which we think we desire, and to which we are journeying, what we

call the conditions of time and space will surely have ceased to be. Time is an accident of our planetary condition. The glorified bodies, with which the resurrection will endow us, will probably have new forces for movement and duty and sustenance such as we cannot imagine now. Once more, in that great multitude of every kindred and nation and people and tongue, if they are to sing together the new song, and to mingle in the saintly and joyous fellowship of those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, they must have one speech and one language in which to praise God and edify one another. But on this, too, there is silence. It may well be that there will be other ways than that of speech for communicating thoughts and enjoying intercourse ; but if speech is to continue, and it seems incredible that it should not, a new language will be needed, and will doubtless be given by Him whose promise is declared, "Behold I make all things new." Of one thing, however, with all these uncertainties, which are compara-

tively of little consequence, we may be perfectly certain, and this is of unspeakable consequence. Christ's love will contrive, and ordain, and provide, and console for all whom He shall finally have rescued from the storms of this troublesome world into the home and fruition of God.

*The Fellowship of Saints.*

THEN there will be the fellowship of saints to represent and convey Christ's love to us—nay, to be the mouthpiece and channel of it. What greetings, what welcomes, what tender embraces, what awed and yet blissful introductions there will be of saint to saint, and martyr to martyr, and teacher to teacher, and friend to friend! Oh, what the Christian martyrs of all successive ages, from Nero's Palatine gardens to Madagascar and Uganda, will have to tell each other; how those who have written for the truth, and those who have given their lives for it—soldiers like Gordon, and bishops like Hannington—shall meet Polycarp and Latimer, to

speaking of the wondrous tender love that dulled the sharpness of the axe, and made the lion's roar like the music of a child singing; and we shall stand outside on the edge of the crowd, thankful to have our standing place there, just to listen to them. Christ is for all, and the saints are for each other; and what the grace, the edification, and delight, and power of that heavenly society will prove, surely we must first be there to discover.

*The Ministry of Angels.*

THEN there will be the ministry of angels, to whom we owe so much more now than we are permitted to know, to whom, then, we shall be better able to express our gratitude for what they have been to us, and done for us, in moments of helplessness and uncertainty, and even despair. We are to spend eternity in their company. If they minister to us here because we are heirs of salvation, shall we not commune with them there, when we are heirs of glory? We are a little lower



than them now—perhaps shall always be. But we are sure they love us, and we may be well assured that we shall love them. They, too, though not members of Christ's incarnate body as we are, ministered to Him in His flesh, minister before Him in His glory. They will surely be also ministers of His love and goodness to us, though in ways that we know not. We must wait to understand.

*The Service of the Saints.*

LOVE being the character, nay, the very nature of Heaven, it is clear that the service and occupation of Heaven will be the simple outgoing and satisfying of that love, in whatever can serve, and please, and glorify Him on whom it is bestowed. To know God's will, must then be instantly and joyfully to fulfil it; and independently of the new means that may then be vouchsafed, of spiritual fellowship, and of divine communications (about which none of us can do more than guess and speculate), we are quite sure that there will be no moral

hindrance, as there too often is now, to ascertaining it, through our own unwillingness to perform it when known; by intuition we shall discover His good pleasure; and by the unerring instinct of our nature we shall hasten to fulfil it. . . .

What that service will be we can only conjecture, we may not presume to declare. But death, so far as we know, cannot interrupt our spiritual existence, and will certainly be unable to affect either our mental powers, or our constitutional gifts, or our moral character. Nay, it is not even conceivable, that the capacities we possess here, with so much to hamper their exercise, and mar their improvement, and check their progress, and disappoint their efforts, should be either suspended or diminished merely through our entrance into another state of being, which may be reasonably likened to a man's entering on mature life after the discipline and pupilage of school. We are justified, therefore, in thinking it at least probable that our service in Heaven may not be altogether unconnected with our employments on

earth ; and that the powers and qualities, and gifts and talents intrusted to us here, will, according to the use and improvement we have made of them, decide our work and position for us in the kingdom of the Father.

## Heaven on Earth.

A SOMEWHAT inexact way of talking is prone to dwell on our being on the way to Heaven ; and it is quite true that an Apostle cheers us "by the hope that is laid up for us in Heaven." So far as Heaven is to be understood as a locality, "where faith is lost in sight, and patient hope is crowned, and everlasting light its glory throws around," the expression is correct. But in a very real and exalted sense, we are in Heaven now. We cannot hear the fluttering of the angels' wings, nor watch the greeting of the saints as they walk under the tree of life, nor hear the harpers harping on their harps, nor catch the strain of the new song from the lips of the hosts of the redeemed. But it is all there for us

to see, when we are ready. Death will not so much take us there, as do for us what Elisha did for his servant Jothan, open our eyes that we may see what has been all round us for years. This being so, how the thought of our citizenship in that glorified society, and our place in the rest that remaineth for the people of God, should help us to walk in the commonest acts of our life, worthily of the vocation wherein we are called! We are on earth, and we must fulfil the duties and taste the joys of earth. But we are also in Heaven, and there need be no inconsistency between the two.

### A Perilous Assurance.

JUDGING from the somewhat perilous assurance of many who speak about meeting their friends in a better world, when neither they nor their friends gave much attention to it while living in this one, we may well, as there is occasion, remind others, and be continually recollecting our-

selves, that the only well-grounded hope of living and reigning with Christ in the world to come, is living and suffering and working for Him in this present world. Balaam could utter the pious hope that he might "die the death of the righteous," but he met his death fighting among the foes of God.

## The Doom of Unbelief.

To those who find out what they have lost, and remember that they have lost it, not through ignorance, but through unbelief, the sense of their loss and their sin will surely be woe enough without our adding in imagination other sorrow to it! One glimpse of His beauty to help them to understand what it is that they have rejected; and then, with the last recollection of Him as one in whose face was the look of an infinite pity but an inflexible justice, to go away into the darkness to see His face no more. Can there be any sorrow to compare with that?

## The Spirit of Hope.

HOPE is not merely the physical accident of a vigorous and sanguine constitution, it is at once the leverage and the test of a soul in which God is pleased to dwell. Hope, hope, oh ! let us cultivate it more ; if there is much to mourn over, there is still more to hope about. The world is not the devil's world, it is God's world. The world is not lost, it is redeemed. There is much evil, and we will not make light of it ; there is much good, and we will keep it to breed and stir more. There are better times coming, let us hasten their coming, when the whole creation, travailing and burdened now, shall be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

## The Second Coming.

“THE Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness ; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing

that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. . . . Wherefore account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." You ask why does the Lord delay? "Long-suffering," is the answer; the patience of the Redeemer's hope. Speaking with trembling lips, and with a sense of unworthiness and incapacity to comprehend the purpose of His all-wise and all-merciful will, we may gather from Holy Scripture these two reasons.

First in our Lord's own words: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." But it takes time to preach it; and even now we are losing time. How much more did the Church lose it, and fail to see her duty about it, from the day that the Moslem invasion devastated the East and South, until the quite recent time when the idea of missions dawned like a revelation on mankind! At this moment there must be millions and millions of souls on which not the feeblest ray from the face or the Cross of Christ has for one moment

lingered ; and let the Church speed on her way with flight as eager and heart as joyous as an angel's from Heaven with a message to some penitent soul, it is still a gigantic task, and a long one, even to preach Christ once to all. . . .

But there is yet another reason why the Lord delays His coming ; where we touch the border of deep and even dark mysteries ; where wise and humble lips will not presume to dogmatise, but where the heart of faith, groping for the light, thinks, hopes, and adores. Those who have a tender compassion for souls, and who, looking out upon the heathen world abroad, and on our heathenised masses at home, think with heart as well as reason what difference the "slant of the sun" in spiritual as well as temporal things must make in the chances of a soul for its life and goodness ; those, too, who observe the gulf that separates even professing Christians in their moral and spiritual condition as they pass out to God ; above all, those who rest upon the divine righteousness, as upon the rock of adamant, and who again and



again say to themselves, as doubts, as chills, and fears, and perplexities disturb and harass them, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"—these seem to see in this delay of the Second Advent the blessed mystery of the redeeming purpose, not indeed fully revealed to us, lest sinners should presume on it—which nevertheless is, and fulfils itself according to the pleasure of Him who willeth not that any should perish, but that all should be saved, while some make light of the Saviour's own words of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that never shall be quenched.

The fact, already hinted, is that millions of human souls, brought into this world by God's providence, without any choice of their own, have passed through and out of it without a single opportunity of savingly knowing Him as their reconciled Father in Christ. The principle is that He will never condemn one of His own creatures for losing a salvation which was never offered to him; and that in some way or other, and at some time or other, we may humbly expect Him, from the hints that

Holy Scripture scatters on the subject, if not what we must independently and assuredly expect of His righteousness and love, to enable them, as He has enabled us to see Him and live.

Thus reverent thinkers are coming increasingly to feel it to be likely that the key to the problems of what is called eschatology is to be found in our blessed Lord's personal administration of the intermediate state ; and that He who has since His resurrection distinctly described Himself as having "the keys of hell and of death," who before His resurrection went and preached to the spirits in prison, may, in that waiting-time for His return, which certainly is not a period of utter unconsciousness, be a centre of light and salvation and goodness to human souls, who here have had no real chance of accepting Him, in a way and by methods of which we can form no conception. But if this be so, it is at least another justification of His delayed return.

“Lord, to whom shall we go?”

NOTHING can rob us of the Gospel story of Christ. Nothing, save the Church's dogmatic faith, can adequately explain His character. Nothing, but wilful, and repeated, and deliberate sin, can separate us from His love. “We have heard Him ourselves.” This is the supreme, the indispensable, the indestructible argument which can accept no substitute, and fears no corrosion. “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”


### Sesame Grains.

To despair of man is to dishonour God.


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A GIFT deferred often means a gift diminished.


HALF our mistakes in life come from being in a hurry.




LOVE to man is often the shortest road to the love of God.




EVERY human soul has something of the nature of God left in it.



THE holiness of the Church is the only way of winning the world.




TRY to learn the hard lesson of *concentration* without *absorption*.




LOVE always and everywhere implies a great faculty of taking trouble.


THE end of life is not personal happiness; it is the image and glory of God.




ASSUREDLY a sore and subtle temptation of middle age is to nurse wrongs.




HEAVEN can be Heaven only to those to whom Christ's love is precious now.



IT marks a real era in life when a man begins to feel that he needs comforting at all.




WHAT exercise is to the body, duty is to the spirit—all duty, whether of this life, or the next.




IF it is a reproach not to have friends, it may be even a greater not to have enemies.


WE may well fear that not only the world, but the Church also, is growing too busy to pray.




No man can do another's work for him. If it is not done by each one for himself, it is not done at all.



IT is not greatness, but littleness, that can easily dispense with human love, and coldly prefers to suffer alone.




HE who gave His presence at the marriage-feast in Cana recognises and sanctifies all human and innocent joy.




To preach Christ's death gives peace, sometimes a false one. To declare His life in Heaven rudely disturbs it.


A GENTLEMAN'S first instinct is to put every one at his ease, and especially to avoid giving unnecessary pain.




It is the constant attitude of the spirit, not only articulate speech from the lips, that is prayer without ceasing.



THE kind of comfort we desire for our sorrows, and the amount of it that meets our necessities, are a vital test of character.




WORK is the end of life, and the product of grace, and the sign of forgiveness, and the fruit of discipline, and the heart of sacrifice.




MANY of us feel that we never can be trusted long with happiness. There are souls which are soon heated and hardened by sunshine.


A CHRISTIAN is a Christian, not merely for the personal object of his individual salvation, but that he may glorify God in saving others.




IT was the gift of the miraculous draught of fishes that made Simon Peter say to Christ, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."



TO be taught to trust God, through suffering the consequences of mistrust, is a lesson worth learning, though at the price of much sorrow.




HAVE enthusiasm ; we cannot have too much of it. But let it be a regulated enthusiasm, and not merely the feverish passion of egotism.




WHAT we most wish for is a test of our real character that cannot be explained away. To how many of us is the coming of Christ our secret hope and stay?




CHARACTER implies self-knowledge and victory over discovered faults, and then the irresistible and incessant power which a consistent life ever wins over mankind.



To have a quick apprehension of the opportunities of kindness is the inevitable reward of doing them ; and to be happy in doing them is at once the effect and the cause.




JESUS OF NAZARETH is the true and blessed meeting-place of childhood with its innocence, youth with its aspirations, manhood with its activities, and age with its retrospect.




It is not permitted to us now to know what we owe to the angels. Some day we shall know, for they will themselves tell us, and how wondering and how profound will our gratitude be !


\* THEY say, if you want to forgive a man, pray for him—though a wise man would never tell him of it. For prayer compels you to love him, and where you love you pardon.



ANY and every suggestion that tends to slacken effort or to chill hope about a soul's salvation must be instantly and emphatically treated and resisted as a temptation from the Accuser of the Saints.



WE are too apt to separate prayer from life, Heaven from earth, holiness from happiness, as if human affections lowered divine aspirations, as if we could be more like God by being less like men.



THE usefulness that never ceases and never irritates is the irresistible charm of a holy example. Only a few can be clever, but all can be good, for God gives His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

HE who in poverty, or sickness, or solitude, can preserve a merry heart and a cheerful countenance is a benefactor to society, a testimony to his God, and the best of all possible friends to himself.

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IN every duty there is strength when the duty is actually present, though not an hour before. For every sacrifice there is joy, deep-hidden, sweet, but not till the voice is heard, "Come, take up the cross and follow me."


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SOMETIMES it seems to one that the greatest peril and disgrace of real Christians is laziness. It is laziness that makes short prayers, a neglected Bible, works that are dead, love that is tepid, interrupted fellowship, and growth stunted, from lack of living water at the roots.


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IF we wish for Heaven only because we are tired of earth, we shall soon want to


leave it and be back here. Heavenly-mindedness, such as God would work in us, is a weariness of sin, not of duty; a desire to see God, not merely to leave men.



IF the great majority of Christians leave so much to God to do that it does not seem to occur to them that they are to be fellow-helpers with Him, some of us act and think as if we were necessary to Him, and as if the world could not be converted without us.




UNLESS fear startled us, or pain unnerved us, or mortality overshadowed us, what a godless world this redeemed earth would be! But for sickness, there would be fewer milestones to tell us of the ever-nearing Eternity. But for sickness, we should never know either God's power or man's love.




You never get thoroughly to understand an earthly friend till you really love him.

Until you love God, and in measure as you love Him, will He be an abstract and awful idea, or a system of unattainable perfection, or a far-off righteousness, or an inflexible Fate—not a Father, who pities, blesses, and saves.




HALF-HEARTEDNESS in religion is the true secret of the want of zeal and power in the Church of Christ; and the famous French sarcasm is sometimes almost as true of sincere as of merely nominal Christians, “that they have just religion enough to make them miserable, but not enough to make them happy.”




THE most fatal and inevitable and subtle of our countless foes is deterioration, whether of body, mind, or will, and the only way of fighting it is by the resolute and habitual doing of things which cost us trouble, and steadily compel us to be at our best. Years do not

bring decay half so fast as the baseness of facile, self-chosen tasks.



WHEN the Church helps men to understand, and trust, and accept, and follow Christ, she is true to herself and to Him. When the thought, and beauty, and presence, and glory of Christ die out of the world's imagination like the colours of the sky when the sun has dropped behind the mountains, it is because the Church slumbers and sleeps.



\* OUR times have been happily called "the times of Christ;" and if they are not His times, whose can they be? Certainly they are the best times the world has seen since He went back to His glory; certainly, also, faith, ever bold and hopeful in proportion to its devotion and sacrifices, looks for them to be better and better, until He finally returns to "make all things new."

WHY are some of us so afraid of the sovereignty of God? Surely much of such fear must spring from ignorance of His nature; much of it, also, from doubts of His goodness. Separate, indeed, will from character; and then the more irresistible the will, the more terrible may be its results. Nothing in all the world is so intelligible or so reasonable as devil worship, if the only God we know of is a vindictive and cruel tyrant never to be appeased but by blood and pain. But our God is a Father.

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\* IF we only rightly understand it, we shall see that what we call the missionary spirit is but an essential and indispensable feature of the regenerate life. We have been saved that we may save; taught, that we may teach; blessed, that we may share our blessings; consoled, that we may go to the mourner and with gentle hand wipe away his tears. . . . As a matter of fact, those who aid missionary enterprise

abroad are the same men who push missionary effort at home, while it only too often happens that those who deprecate foreign missions in the interest of home activities are admirably impartial in aiding neither.



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# INDEX

- ABSORPTION**, 262  
**Adornment** and dress,  
     108-109  
**Advice**, value of, 185-186  
**Affliction** and Providence,  
     90-91  
     of the good, 155  
     (*see* Sorrow)  
**After death**, 241-253  
**Age**, dangers of the, 75-76  
**Age**, Old; its contented work,  
     224-225  
     the beauty of, 226  
     ghosts of the past,  
         226-228  
**Angels**, ministry of, 250, 267  
**Appreciation**, the help of, 196  
**Aridity** of soul, 60-61  
**Art**, music, and science, 104  
**Assurance**, from experience,  
     71-72  
     a perilous, 254-255  
  
**BAPTISM**, 78  
**Bereavement**, the great loss  
     in, 193-194  
     (*see* Death)  
**Bethel**, Gilgal, and Jordan,  
     38-39  
**Bible**, The, Christ's solace  
     and delight, 72  
     ought we to read any-  
         thing else, 73-74  
     physical research and  
         the, 70, 74-75  
  
**Bible**, The, dangers of the  
     age, 75-76  
**Body**, God's care for the,  
     80-81  
     the glorified, 247  
  
**CENSURE** and unkindness,  
     201-202  
**Character**, influence of,  
     197-198  
     what it implies, 267  
**Cheerfulness**, 269  
**Children**, the flower of the  
     world, 132-133  
     their need of sympathy,  
         133  
     their spiritual troubles,  
         134-135  
     hints on training, 136-  
         138  
     joys of childhood, 138  
     suffering of, 139  
     death of, 140-141  
     boyhood and girlhood,  
         141-143  
     ours are God's, 143-144  
     grown up, 144-146  
     father and child, 147-149  
     letters to, 205, 207  
**Christ**, and the world, 17-18  
     pre-eminent, 18-19  
     the claim of, 19-20  
     His own religion, 20  
     and the human will,  
         20-21, 27-28

- Christ known only by faith, 21-22  
 in His humanity, 25-27  
 His love of the individual soul, 49-50  
 independence of ordinances, 59-60  
 learned through suffering, 156  
 the death of, 233-234  
 "the times of," 272
- Christian, and worldling, 83  
 purpose of a, 266
- Church, The, 262, 272
- Coming, The Second, 256-260
- Common duties and saintliness, 79-80
- Concentration, 262
- Condolence, 204
- Confidence delusive, 75-76
- Consolations, 61-62
- Contemplation, 53-55
- Content of frugality, 113-114
- Conversation, 198-199
- Courtesy at home, 124
- Creeds, respect for other, 77-78
- Cross, the, the heritage of man, 30-32
- DAILY life, religion in,  
 saintliness and common duties, 79-80  
 God's care for the body, 80-81  
 love of life, 81-82  
 the Christian and the worldling, 83  
 happiness and peace, 83-85  
 divine providence, 85-88  
 special providence, 88-90  
 providence and affliction, 90-91  
 providence and prayer, 92
- Daily life, does God answer prayer? 93-94  
 prayer for temporal blessings, 95-96  
 possibilities of prayer, 95-97  
 prayer the measure of holiness, 97  
 patience with God's delay, 99-100  
 God's purpose in us, 101  
 God's instruments, 101-102  
 the struggle with the old Adam, 102-104  
 science, music, and art, 104
- Dangers of the age, 75-76
- Death, the approach of,  
 our times are in God's hands, 228-229  
 the desire to live, 229-231  
 in the great emergency, 231-232  
 our last earthly service 233  
 Our Lord's experience, 233-234  
 the anguish of, 234-235  
 the right view of, 235-236  
 of children, 140-141  
 the love of the departed, 174  
 our chief regret, 175  
 reasonableness in sorrow, 175-177  
 if we could have foreseen, 178  
 would we bring back the lost? 179  
 the great loss in bereavement, 193-194  
 after, 241-253
- Delusive confidence, 76-77
- Desire and character, 266
- Deterioration, one cause of, 271

- Devoutness, 51-53  
 Disappointments, in love, 181  
   in business, 183  
   God's purpose in, 184  
 Discipline (*see* Suffering)  
 Distrust, the sin of, 51  
   and trust, 266  
 Doubt, God's answer to,  
   47-49  
   intellectual temptations,  
     174-175  
   dangers of the age,  
     75-76  
 Dress and adornment, 108-109  
 Duty, 269  
 Duties, common, and saint-  
   liness, 78-80
- END of life, the, 263  
 Engagements (*see* Love and  
   Marriage)  
 Enthusiasm, 266  
 Evil, the enigma of, 152  
 Example, 268  
 Expenditure, excessive, 111  
 Experience, the assurance  
   from, 71-72
- FAITH, the one way of know-  
   ing God, 21-22  
   the disaster of lost, 22-24  
   trials of, 41-46  
   the vision of, 173-174  
 Fasting, 66-67  
 Father (*see* Children)  
 Fatherhood of God, 39, 41, 273  
 Freedom of the will, 27-28  
 Friendship, value of advice,  
   185  
   the spiritual help of,  
     186-187  
   the best service in,  
     187-188  
   sweet reasonableness of,  
     188-189  
   dread of obligation,  
     190-191
- Forgiveness and love, 268
- GENTLEMAN, A, 265  
 Gifts deferred, 261  
 Gilgal, Bethel, and Jordan,  
   38-39  
 God, His fatherhood, 37, 41,  
   273  
   when He hides His face,  
     42-46  
   sense of possessing, 46-47  
   His answer to doubt,  
     47-49  
   His care for us, 80-81  
   answers prayer, 93-95  
   ever faithful, 98-99  
   patience with His delay,  
     99-100  
   His purpose in us, 101  
   His instruments, 101-102  
   our children His, 143-144  
   effect of His goodness,  
     266
- Good, affliction of the, 155
- HALF-HEARTEDNESS, 271  
 Happiness and peace, 83-85  
   danger of, 265, 270  
 Heaven, the silence of Christ,  
   241-242  
   where it is, 244-246  
   the glorified body, 247  
   a new world, 247-249  
   the fellowship of saints,  
     249  
   ministry of angels, 250  
   the service of the saints,  
     251-253  
   fitness for, 269  
 Heaven on earth, 253-254  
 Help, willingness to, 203  
 Holy Communion, 56-59  
 Holiness, 55-56  
   prayer the measure of,  
     97  
   of the Church, 262  
 Home, courtesy at, 124

Hope, 256, 268  
 Humanity on the Cross,  
     30-32  
 Humble souls, radiance of, 71  
 Hurry, 262

ILL HEALTH, the service of,  
     168 (*see* Sickness)

Intolerance, religious, 77

Intoxicants, the use of,  
     216-219

Inner Life, the,

    God's fatherhood, 39-40  
     trials of faith, 41-42

    God's face hidden, 42-45  
     sense of possessing God,  
     46-47

    God's answer to doubt,  
     47-49

    Christ's love for the  
     individual soul, 49-50

    the sin of distrust, 51

    devoutness, 51-52

    meditation, 53

    contemplation, 53-54

    the striving for holiness,  
     55

    Holy Communion, 56-59  
     Christ's independence of

    ordinances, 59-60

    aridity of soul, 60

    spiritual consolations,  
     61-62

    spiritual sloth, 62-64

    lukewarmness, 64-66

    the value of fasting,  
     66-67

    jealousy and repining,  
     67-68

    littleness of soul, 68-70

    the radiance of humble  
     souls, 71

    the assurance of expe-  
     rience, 71-72

JEALOUSY and repining, 67-68

Jesting in letters, danger  
     of, 208

Judgment, sitting in, 200

Just, the sorrows of the,  
     155, 170

KINDNESS, 267

Knowledge not to be de-  
     spised, 73-74

LETTER-WRITING, accessibi-  
     lity, 203, 207-8

    condolence, 204

    letters to children, 205

    old ties, 206-207

    danger of jesting, 208

    letters to be kept, 208-209  
     to be destroyed, 210

Life, our heritage of the  
     Cross, 30-32

    the three stages of, 38-39  
     the end of, 263

    (*see* Daily Life and Inner  
     Life)

Littleness of soul, 68-70

Loss (*see* Death)

Love, 262-270

Love and Marriage

    early, long, and mistaken  
     engagements, 116-119

    conditions of a happy  
     marriage, 119-120

    honeymoons, 120-121

    the first year, 121-122

    the best dowry, 122-124

    courtesy at home, 124

    unwise devotedness, 124-  
     125

    the spiritual in marriage,  
     125-126

    improvident and un-  
     happy marriages, 127-  
     130

    as the years go by, 131

Lukewarmness, 64-66

MARRIAGE, (*see* Love and  
     Marriage)



- Meditation, 53  
 Missionary spirit, the, 273-274  
 Money, its tests, 105  
     the right view of speculation, 106-107  
     wealth a stewardship, 107-108  
     innocent indulgence, 109-111  
     excessive outlay, 111  
     sordid cares, 111-112  
     frugal content, 113-114  
     the Christian attitude towards, 114  
     the Nemesis of sinful success, 114-116  
 Music, science, and art, 104  
 Mystery of pain, the, 151  
 NEW TIES not a sign of fickleness, 177-178  
 OBLIGATIONS, dread of in friends, 190-191  
 Old age (*see* Age)  
 Old Adam, our struggle with, 102-104  
 Old maids, 130-131  
 Ordinances, the place of, 59  
     Christ's independence of, 59-60  
 PAIN, the mystery of, 151-152  
 Past, ghosts of the, 226-228  
 Patience with God's delay, 99-100  
 Paul, St., disciplined by suffering, 156-157  
 Peace not happiness, 83-85  
 Penitence and Repentance, 41-42  
 Prayer, and Providence, 92-93  
     does God answer? 93-95  
     for temporal blessings, 95-96  
     the possibilities of, 96-97  
 Prayer, the measure of holiness, 97  
 REASON baffled by the divine, 21  
 Religion, attacked but indestructible, 17-18  
 Repentance and penitence, 41-42  
 Repining and jealousy, 67-68  
     58  
 Resurrection, the solace of, 173  
     the basis of faith, 237  
     the miracle of miracles, 237-238  
     the pledge of immortality, 239-240  
 SACRIFICE, the habit of, 32-34  
     the joy of, 269  
 Saints, the fellowship of the, 249  
     the service of the, 251  
 Saintliness and common duties, 78-79  
 Science, music, and art, 104  
 Self-denial for Christ's sake, Charity better than freedom, 215-216  
     use of intoxicants, 216-218  
     going to the theatre, 219-221  
     Sunday observance, 221-223  
 Self-importance, 270  
 Self-surrender, 28-30  
 Service of ill health, 168  
 Shadow of the Valley, the, 149-150  
 Sin, the sense of, 34  
     vitality of, 35  
     penalty of, 36  
     repentance, 37  
 Sickness, the blessings of, 158-159

- Sickness, patience in, 160-161  
 resignation, 162-163  
 temptations of, 164  
 compensations in, 165-167
- Sloth spiritual, 62-64, 269
- Sorrow, the illumination of, 168  
 the weaning of, 169  
 of the just, 170  
 evidence of God in, 171-173
- Soul, aridity of, 60-61  
 littleness of, 68-70
- Souls, radiance of humble, 71
- Speculation, the right view of, 106-107
- Spinsterhood, beloved, 130-131
- Spiritualism, the folly of, 242-244
- Struggle with the Old Adam, the, 102-104
- Success, the Nemesis of sinful, 114-116
- Sunday observance, 221-223
- Suffering, the meaning of, 153-154  
 sickness and sorrow, 155-172
- Sympathy, what it is and means, 192-195
- Sympathy, need of experience, 195  
 help of appreciation, 196
- THEATRE, going to the, 219-221
- "Times of Christ, the," 272
- Trials of faith, 41-46
- Trouble, things that cost no, 271
- Trust and mistrust, 266
- UNBELIEF, the doom of, 255-256
- Unkindness and censure, 201-202
- Usefulness, 211
- VALLEY of the Shadow, the, 149-150
- WEALTH a stewardship, 107-108  
 (*see* Money)
- Well-doing, unweariedness in, 215
- Will of man left free, 20-21
- Work, and sanctification, 212  
 the secret of good, 213
- World, the, and Christ, 17-18  
 and Heaven, 268
- Worlding and Christian, 83
- Wrongs, the misery of, 263

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